Cook's Country

MAY 2015

These soft, buttery rolls—also known as "Yankee rolls" for their Northeast origin—are easier to make than they look. But it still took a few weeks in the test kitchen to get them delicately tender with crisp edges. PAGE 20

Butter Fan Rolls

Breakfast Pizza

North Carolina Lemon Pie

Stuffed Pork Loin
New, Easier Technique

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Hearty Ranch Dinner

Quick Toffee Squares
Salty, Sweet, and Crunchy

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Cook's Country

Dear Home Cook,

Ten years ago, I visited a haberdashery (OK, a hat store) in Cincinnati. The Greek owner was an opera fan, as am I, and quite sociable, so we got to talking. Meanwhile, two teenagers walked by outside the plate-glass window, eating sandwiches on the run. He looked at them, turned to me, and said, "Even dogs don't eat and walk at the same time!"

So what's wrong with the photo below? Well, besides the choice of food, this young man is both standing up while eating and eating alone. Researchers in Denmark have determined that families that sit down and share food are more likely to produce nicer kids. Sharing food draws family and friends together. Sociologists call this "pro-social" behavior—I call it good manners.

Most cultures sit down and share food. Maybe that's a good place to start if we want to change the world, one plate at a time.

Cordially,

Christopher Kimball
Founder and Editor, Cook's Country

Photo by Lambert/Getty Images

Cook's Country

APRIL/MAY 2015

Contents

ONE-PAN PORK CHOP DINNER, 14

BRAISED SPRING VEGETABLES, 13

NORTH CAROLINA LEMON PIE, 22

Features

4 Herb-Stuffed Pork Roast
To transform dry, disappointing pork loin into a flavorful centerpiece, you have to go deep.

5 Apples Fried with Bacon
Not all historical dishes merit reviving, but after tinkering, this one was ready for a comeback.

6 Beef on Weck
To do justice to Buffalo's signature sandwich, we worked our way from the outside in. **PLUS** Tasting Dill Pickles

8 Cracker-Crusted Fried Chicken
Crunchy cracker crumbs can make a great fried chicken coating. But it took three weeks in the test kitchen and 60 pounds of chicken to get the texture just right.

9 Lemon and Herb Potato Salad
Forget the mayonnaise. An herbed vinaigrette makes it light and fresh.

10 Bierock Casserole
Bierocks—handheld buns filled with beef, cabbage, and cheese—are definitely tasty, but they take a long time to make. We wanted the same great flavors in casserole form.

11 Garden State Health Salad
This sweet-and-sour salad became popular at the Claremont Diner in Verona, New Jersey. The diner is gone, but we wanted the salad to live on.

12 Chicken California
James Beard championed this turn-of-the-century dish from California's San Joaquin Valley, but his recipe left some mysteries to solve.

13 Braised Spring Vegetables
It's an unlikely scenario—early season vegetables cooked at a low simmer to amplify their fresh flavors—but it works.

14 One-Pan Pork Chop Dinner
Pork chops and roasted vegetables pair well on the plate, but could we get them to cook together on the same baking sheet?

15 Pasta with Roasted Tomatoes
Slow-roasting tomatoes can take hours. We wanted the same deep flavors in a fraction of the time.

17 Matzo Ball Soup
Tender dumplings and a savory broth make a happy pair. Just don't introduce them too soon.

18 Breakfast Pizza
Eggs and bacon on a cheese pizza? Sounds like an excellent breakfast to us. If only we could get the crust to crisp and the eggs to cooperate. **PLUS** Testing Pizza Cutters

20 Butter Fan Rolls
These multilayered buns are more than cute—they pack an outsize punch of flavor. But they're very particular about one thing: location.

21 Skillet Turkey Meatballs with Lemony Rice
A smack of citrus provides a wake-up call for this easy, one-pan weeknight supper.

22 North Carolina Lemon Pie
This light, bright lemon pie has a perfect balance of sweet, salty, and sour. Best of all? It's dead simple to make.

23 Toffee Squares
How do you replicate the buttery-sweet flavor of toffee without making it from scratch? With a few tricks and some smart shopping.

Departments

2 ASK COOK'S COUNTRY
3 KITCHEN SHORTCUTS
16 GETTING TO KNOW **Fruit Condiments**
24 COOKING CLASS **Italian-Style Meat Sauce**
26 SLOW COOKER **Chicken Stock**
27 RECIPE MAKEOVER **Chicken and Cheese Enchiladas**
28 COOKING FOR TWO **Weeknight Pork Stew**
29 FIVE EASY RECIPES **Tuna Salads**
30 TASTE TEST **Supermarket Sharp Cheddar Cheese**
31 EQUIPMENT REVIEW **Can Openers**
32 HEIRLOOM RECIPE **Pickled Shrimp**
33 THE GREAT AMERICAN CAKE **Lemon Meringue Cake**

Vegetarian Dishes That Satisfy

Put vegetables front and center with our newest cookbook, ***The Complete Vegetarian Cookbook***, which features 700 easy, inventive vegetarian recipes for appetizers, soups and stews, main dishes, and more. No one will leave the table unsatisfied.

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AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN
RECIPES THAT WORK*

America's Test Kitchen is a very real 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Country* and *Cook's Illustrated* magazines and the workday destination of more than three dozen test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes until we understand how and why they work and arrive at the best version. We also test kitchen equipment and supermarket ingredients in search of products that offer the best value and performance. You can watch us work by tuning in to *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen* (CooksCountry.com) and *America's Test Kitchen* (AmericasTestKitchen.com) on public television.

Ask Cook's Country

BY MORGAN BOLLING

What is the best way to toast whole almonds, and how do you know when they're fully toasted?

Val Sullivan, Aurora, Colo.

Toasting almonds—or any nuts—helps release their essential oils and makes them more flavorful. If you're toasting less than 1 cup of nuts, place them in a dry skillet set over medium heat and stir frequently until they're fragrant and have darkened slightly, 3 to 5 minutes. If you're toasting more than a cup, put the nuts on a rimmed baking sheet and toast them in a preheated 350-degree oven for about 7 minutes, shaking the sheet frequently to prevent scorching.

Properly toasted whole nuts are not just browned on the outside, but all the way through the nut flesh—cut one in half to check for light browning.

BOTTOM LINE: Toast small amounts of nuts on the stovetop and larger amounts in the oven. A nut is properly toasted when it is brown throughout.

MORE THAN SKIN DEEP
Toasting nuts develops flavor inside, too.

I keep seeing coconut water in the grocery store. Is it similar to the canned stuff I cook with?

Sally Lamoretti, Erie, Pa.

Coconut water, also referred to as coconut juice, is the thin liquid found in the center of a coconut. It has become increasingly trendy lately, in part because of its purported hydrating qualities.

Coconut water is very different from coconut milk. While coconut water is naturally occurring, coconut milk is made by steeping coconut flesh in water and then straining out the solids. Coconut water has a much lower fat content than coconut milk (less than 1 gram per cup as opposed to about 50 grams per cup). It therefore tastes thinner and less rich. It also tastes sweeter, which makes sense given that it typically contains more than three times the sugar of coconut milk.

Tasters thought that coconut water had more of a floral flavor and weaker coconut notes than coconut milk. Because it is so vastly different, coconut water is not suitable for cooking.

BOTTOM LINE: Coconut water has a significantly thinner consistency and is bland in flavor compared with coconut milk, so it is suitable only for drinking, not cooking.

I recently had grilled avocado at a restaurant and loved the look of it. But when I cooked avocado at home, it was bitter. What gives?

Ben Randow, Middletown, Conn.

Many people caution against cooking avocados, saying that exposure to heat can turn the otherwise softly sweet avocado bitter and unpleasant. After grilling a few avocado halves and finding a range of flavor results, from pleasant to inedible, we consulted our science editor to find out whether heat was the culprit. He explained that the unpleasant flavor in cooked avocado comes from avocado's specific chemical makeup—when it reaches a certain level of heat and is held there for a certain amount of time, chemical changes occur, resulting in off-flavors.

To test the theory, we tried microwaving, grilling, and baking avocados. We also made a large batch of avocado soup and cooked it to a variety of temperatures for different lengths of time. We found that avocados need to reach 140 degrees and stay there longer than 20 minutes (or 190 degrees for 1½ minutes) in order to trigger the chemical release and produce unpleasantly bitter flavors. This explains why grilled and fried avocados, which have added visual appeal and texture but are not extensively heated, don't taste bitter.

BOTTOM LINE: Avocados can handle short bursts of heat—just long enough for grill marks—but extensive cooking of this fruit will create off-putting flavors.

QUICK COOKING IS OK
But too much cooking makes avocado bitter.

I know that nothing beats homemade, but sometimes I like to take a shortcut and purchase frosting from my grocery store. Do you have a suggestion for how much frosting I would need for a standard cake?

Christy Hunter, Ames, Iowa

While we do not suggest that you use canned frosting from the baking aisle from a flavor standpoint, we recognize its value in a pinch. In order to answer your question, we measured the amount of frosting sold in a standard can and created a conversion. A typical 1-pound container from the baking aisle contains just over 1½ cups of frosting.

Manufacturers claim that each can should be able to frost one 9-inch layer cake. But by our measurements, these cans contain much less than what's needed.

Be aware that our measurements allow for a layer of frosting between ¼ inch and ½ inch thick, so if you have a heavy hand when frosting, budget for more.

We did find that you can stretch canned frosting by chilling it in the refrigerator for 1 hour and then whipping it with a whisk attachment for 5 minutes. Doing so, we were able to expand a typical can's 1½ cups of frosting to just under 2½ cups. This frosting was lighter in texture but was able to cover a lot more of our 9-inch cake (though we still needed two cans to get the job done).

WELL-FROSTED
Plenty of good stuff.

SKIMPY
Frosted according to the can.

BOTTOM LINE: We recommend homemade frosting, but in a pinch, you can follow our chart to determine how many cans of frosting you'll need for standard cake sizes.

Cake Size	Amount of Frosting Needed	Canned Frosting
9-inch two-layer cake	4 cups	3 cans
9-inch three-layer cake	5½ cups	4 cans
13 by 9-inch one-layer sheet cake	4 cups	3 cans
24 cupcakes	3 cups (2 tablespoons/cupcake)	2 cans
Add a decorative edge	+ 1 cup	+ 1 can
Add writing on top of a cake	+ 4 tablespoons	+ 4 tablespoons

I love cooking with bacon fat, but my girlfriend is a vegetarian. Is there a meatless substitute that tastes similar?

Louis Timmons, Los Alamos, N.M.

In a bid to build a substitute that would mimic bacon fat's savory, smoky, sweet, and fatty qualities, we tested a variety of fats (coconut oil, vegetable oil, olive oil, Crisco, and butter) flavored with a range of ingredients in various proportions, including soy sauce, smoked paprika, chiles in adobo, miso paste, porcini mushrooms, liquid smoke, maple syrup, maple extract, apple cider vinegar, and more.

After all this testing, the closest substitute was a combination of ¼ cup of refined coconut oil, 2 teaspoons of miso paste, 1 teaspoon of maple syrup, and ¼ teaspoon of liquid smoke. We heated all the ingredients in a 10-inch skillet over low heat for 5 minutes. Then we strained the mixture through a fine-mesh strainer.

The concoction was satisfactory as a cooking medium, but tasters found that, ultimately, it lacked the unmistakable porky qualities of bacon. And with so many ingredients, it was ridiculously complicated to create.

Because bacon fat's smoke point is close to those of olive oil and canola oil, either will work as a direct substitute for cooking. They just will not yield the same flavor results.

BOTTOM LINE: While our formula for faux bacon fat may get you close, nothing truly captures the savory, smoky, sweet flavors of bacon fat—except bacon fat.

To ask us a cooking question, visit **CooksCountry.com/ask**. Or write to Ask Cook's Country, P.O. Box 470739, Brookline, MA 02447. Just try to stump us!

Kitchen Shortcuts

COMPILED BY SHANNON FRIEDMANN HATCH

NEAT TRICK

For Good Measure

Ann Musgrove, Eugene, Ore.

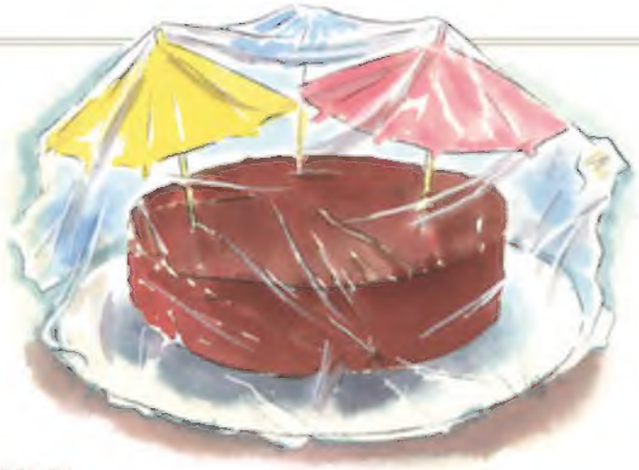
It was always a hassle to find my set of measuring spoons in the drawer. And since mine were held together with a ring, I grew tired of cleaning the whole set when I used just one. My solution was to individually place the ones I use most often in a decorative toothbrush holder on my counter. It looks nice and they're always at hand.

TIDY TIP

Egg Protection

Sanna King, Winchester, Mo.

When I take deviled eggs to a gathering, I line muffin tins with cupcake liners and place an egg in each cup. This way they don't slide around, and the liners make serving easy.



NEAT TRICK

Pitching a New (Plastic Wrap) Tent

Anne Holub, Chicago, Ill.

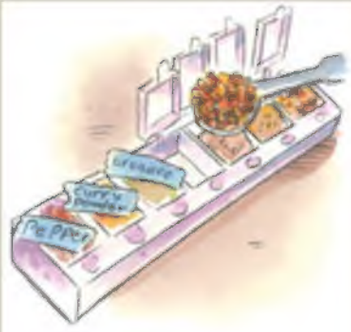
Plain toothpicks will tent plastic wrap over cakes just fine, but for warm-weather get-togethers, I like to use cocktail umbrellas. They don't poke through the plastic, and they add a festive touch.

CLEVER TIP

Pastry Bag Prop

Virginia Perkins, Laredo, Texas

I didn't think I had a container tall enough to hold my large pastry bag upright—that is, until I tried my blender jar. It supports the bag so that I have both hands free to fill it.



SMART TIP

Portable Spice Rack

Paulette Phillips, Westfield, Wis.

We love to travel in our little camper, but storage space is at a premium. Rather than carry full-size spice bottles, I place what we need in a compact seven-day pill box. I use painter's tape to label the spices. Each snap-shut compartment holds about 2 tablespoons, plenty for our trip.

CLEVER TIP **Preserving Bacon Flavor**

Bill Schlag, Chardon, Ohio

I like to save bacon fat and use it in place of butter or oil in savory dishes that benefit from a bit of pork flavor. After letting it cool for 20 minutes, I pour the fat into an ice cube tray and freeze it. Once they are frozen, I put the cubes (approximately 2 tablespoons each) into a zipper-lock bag for storage.

DOUBLE DUTY

Safety Blade

Dawn Provencher, La Luz, N.M.

Whenever I have kids help me in the kitchen, I'm careful to keep sharp knives out of their reach. I've found that many items—dough, some fruits and vegetables, and cheese, for example—can be cut easily and safely by kids using a bench scraper. Not only is its edge blunt, but its wide handle allows for a good grip.

Submit a tip online at **CooksCountry.com/kitchenshortcuts** or send a letter to Kitchen Shortcuts, *Cook's Country*, P.O. Box 470739, Brookline, MA 02447. Include your name, address, and phone number. If we publish your tip, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Cook's Country*. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

Illustration: Ross MacDonald

Herb-Stuffed Pork Roast

To transform dry, disappointing pork loin into a flavorful centerpiece, you have to go deep.

BY MORGAN BOLLING

PORK LOIN CAN be disappointing. Lean and mild, it's too often overcooked, leading to sad suppers of dry, flavorless meat that no amount of marinade, sauce, crust, or stuffing can save. I set out to make a moist, flavorful pork loin roast that would restore my faith in this readily available cut and serve as a resplendent centerpiece for a happy gathering.

The test kitchen has been down the pork loin route before, so I had a few guidelines to help me get started. We like to pull the meat from the oven when it reaches 135 degrees, as carryover cooking will take the internal temperature to 140 degrees, at which point the pork is perfectly cooked. I made the decision to go with a boneless roast here, as they are easier to find and to work with than the bone-in variety. But to make it remarkable, I knew I'd have to add flavor.

I started with two beautiful boneless loin roasts. I'd need a way to deeply season them: I tested brining the pork versus rubbing it with a salt mixture and letting it sit, refrigerated, for several hours. After a few tests it became clear that salting the meat was much easier, as I didn't have to wrestle a big brine bucket in and out of the refrigerator.

Cooking the pork to the proper temperature was relatively easy; a handful of tests showed that searing the roast in a skillet on the stovetop before roasting it in a low, 275-degree oven was the surest path to perfectly cooked pork. The sear added a little of the depth of flavor that this cut so sorely needs. And the low oven temperature cooked the lean meat gently while minimizing the chance of overcooking. For an even better sear, I added a little sugar to the salt rub.

As for pairing the pork with flavorful ingredients, I started by testing different sauces to serve with the roast. After a few days of sampling sauces, my tasters whittled down the options for this springtime roast to two Italian favorites: pesto (made with olive oil, garlic, Parmesan, and basil) and *salsa verde* (consisting of parsley, anchovies, capers, and lemon). I took a little culinary liberty and combined the two into a serious but lively sauce: briny, herby, bright, and complex.

With garlic, Parmesan, parsley, basil, capers, anchovies, and lemon, the green swirl inside this roast is much more than just decorative.

My tasters liked the sauce so much, in fact, that they wanted more of it. Could I stuff the roast with more of this bright green elixir? I tried cutting a pocket into the roast, stuffing it, and tying it up with twine; this worked OK, but the pocket didn't hold much stuffing. A better option was opening the roast like a book, pounding it to an even thickness, and smearing on a good coating of the sauce. Then I rolled up the roast, tied it to hold its shape, seared it, and put it in the oven.

Wow. Now the bright sauce seasoned the roast inside and out, imparting a wide range of flavors to every bite. Backtracking slightly, I found that butterflying the roast before rubbing on the salt/sugar mixture allowed even more of the seasoning to infuse the meat. What's more, I could do this ahead of time; the rub needs at least an hour to work its magic, but you can rub and refrigerate the roast up to a day before you cook it. I was almost done.

While waiting for my next pork loin to rest, I threw together a quick pan sauce, taking advantage of the flavorful pork drippings by cooking them down with garlic, shallot, chicken broth, and wine. I sliced into the roast and knew I was finally in business: a mahogany crust, juicy meat, a bright herby stuffing, and an easy, tasty sauce for serving.

HERB-STUFFED PORK LOIN Serves 8

Plan ahead: The roast must be seasoned at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours in advance. You will need an ovensafe nonstick skillet for this recipe.

- 1 (3- to 3½-pound) boneless center-cut pork loin roast
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 8 garlic cloves (3 sliced thin, 5 unpeeled)
- 2 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (1 cup)
- ¾ cup minced fresh parsley
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh basil
- ¼ cup capers, minced
- 3 anchovy fillets, rinsed and minced
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 2 teaspoons juice
- 1 shallot, peeled and halved
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2 cups chicken broth
- ¼ cup heavy cream

1. Position roast fat side up on cutting board. Insert knife two-thirds of way up from bottom of roast along 1 long side and cut horizontally, stopping ½ inch before edge to create flap. Open up flap. At hinge, cut down into thicker portion of roast, stopping ½ inch from bottom. Pivot knife parallel to cutting board and cut horizontally in opposite direction, stopping ½ inch before edge, to create second flap. Open up this flap and lay meat flat. If meat is of uneven thickness, cover roast with plastic wrap and pound to even thickness with meat pounder.

2. Combine sugar and 1 tablespoon salt in bowl. Sprinkle roast all over with sugar-salt mixture. Transfer roast to gallon-size zipper-lock bag, seal, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Heat ¼ cup oil and sliced garlic cloves in ovensafe 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until garlic begins to brown slightly, about 3 minutes. Transfer garlic and oil to bowl and let cool for 5 minutes. Stir Parmesan, parsley, basil, capers, anchovies, lemon zest, and ½ teaspoon pepper into garlic oil.

4. Place roast on cutting board, cut side up. Spread herb mixture evenly over surface of roast, leaving ½-inch border on all sides. Starting from short side farthest from exterior fat cap, roll tightly, then tie with kitchen twine at 1-inch intervals. Season roast with pepper.

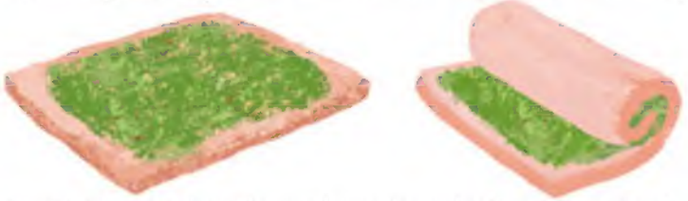
5. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in now-empty skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown roast on all sides, about 10 minutes. Flip roast seam side down in skillet. Add shallot, rosemary sprigs, and unpeeled garlic cloves to skillet and transfer to oven. Cook until thickest part of roast registers 135 degrees, 65 to 70 minutes. Transfer roast to carving board, tent loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest for 30 minutes. Do not clean skillet.

6. Meanwhile, use spoon to smash garlic in skillet (skillet handle will be hot). Place skillet over medium-high heat and cook until shallot and garlic are sizzling. Stir in flour and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add wine and cook until nearly evaporated, about 2 minutes. Add broth and cream and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until sauce is reduced to about 1 cup and thickened, 10 to 12 minutes. Strain through fine-mesh strainer set over small saucepan; discard solids. Stir in lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and keep warm.

7. Discard twine and slice roast ½ inch thick. Serve, passing sauce separately.

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE Butterflying and Stuffing a Pork Loin

OPEN AND SEASON With fat side up, cut into the loin two-thirds up from the bottom, stopping ½ inch from the edge. Peel back the top flap and cut down, stopping ½ inch from the bottom. Now cut back into the thicker mass, again stopping ½ inch from the edge. Open up loin, flatten, season, and refrigerate for 1 to 24 hours.



FILL AND ROLL Spread the filling evenly over the interior side, leaving a ½-inch border on all sides. Carefully roll the roast leaving the fat side up. Tie at 1-inch intervals.

Illustration: Lauren Pettapiece

Apples Fried with Bacon

Not all historical dishes merit reviving, but after tinkering, this one was ready for a comeback.

BY ASHLEY MOORE

Bacon, lemon, and sage give this dish formidable flavor.

ONCE A POPULAR country-style dish, apples fried with bacon also has White House connections: Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Jimmy Carter would request the dish for breakfast before tackling the pressing issues of the day. I embarked on a journey to learn more about this unexpected pairing.

After diving a little deeper (as far back as 1878, in Marion Harland's cookbook *The Dinner Year Book*), I learned that, for many years, this sweet and salty combination was enjoyed as a side dish at dinnertime, too. I collected various recipes—some old, some new—and headed into the test kitchen.

The basic method—sautéing sliced apples in bacon fat—was the same across all the recipes I uncovered; what few disparities existed were mostly about the variety of apple to use and how exactly the apples were cut. I found it easy to pick a lane on the shape of the apples: Coarsely chopped apples cooked much too quickly and turned to mush, while rings were unwieldy. I settled on thick wedges—four per apple—which looked great on the plate and provided plenty of surface area for caramelization. I also decided to keep the peels on to help the apple quarters hold their shape.

Tasters preferred sweeter apples (Fuji, Gala, or Braeburn) to tart Granny Smiths. But I was frustrated by the structure and texture of the apples—one batch was too mushy, the next too firm. I wanted apple slices that were tender and nicely browned but still held their shape. I put the microwave to use here, zapping the apples for 5 minutes to soften them. After draining them and patting them dry with paper towels, I sautéed the partially cooked apples in the rendered bacon fat (about 3 to 4 minutes per side) to caramelize the exteriors. Just right.

I added a spritz of lemon juice for a pop of brightness, a bit of salt and pepper for balance, and a toss of fresh chopped sage for depth.

APPLES FRIED WITH BACON

Serves 4 to 6

Be sure to thoroughly dry the apples after draining them in step 1 so they caramelize. Depending on how your apples are cut, it may be necessary to prop them up against one another as they cook.

- 3 Fuji, Gala, or Braeburn apples, cored and quartered
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Salt and pepper
- 3 slices bacon, cut into ½-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice

1. Microwave apples in covered bowl until softened, about 5 minutes. Drain apples in colander, then pat dry with paper towels. Toss apples, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper together in bowl until apples are evenly coated.

2. Meanwhile, cook bacon in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towel–lined plate, leaving fat in skillet.

3. Arrange apples in skillet, with 1 cut side down, and increase heat to medium-high. Cook until well browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip apples to second cut side and continue to cook until well browned on second side, about 3 minutes longer. Off heat, stir in sage, lemon juice, and bacon until combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve.

Beef on Weck

To do justice to Buffalo's signature sandwich, we worked our way from the outside in. BY MORGAN BOLLING

RESIDENTS OF BUFFALO, New York, put beef on weck sandwiches right up there with Buffalo wings as their most beloved local dish. The sandwich is a relatively simple affair—a salty roll called a ***kummelweck*** is piled high with thinly sliced roast beef, jus, and horseradish sauce. But as with many seemingly simple recipes, getting it just right isn't so easy. Especially in a home kitchen.

While most sandwiches are all about the filling, the kummelweck rolls are at least as important as the beef in this case. These rolls are similar to kaiser rolls but are accented with caraway seeds and a hefty dose of kosher salt. Making the rolls from scratch was more work than I wanted to do, so I tried several methods for adding salt and caraway seeds to plain store-bought kaiser rolls. In the end, the most effective trick was to microwave a slurry of cornstarch and water to create a "glue" to brush on top of the rolls, which I then sprinkled with salt and caraway seeds before lightly toasting them in the oven. The rolls were nicely seasoned with a soft interior and crusty, salty exterior.

Need more Buffalo? Find our recipe for Boneless Buffalo Chicken at **CooksCountry.com/bonelessbuffalochicken.**

If I was going through the effort of roasting beef for sandwiches, I wanted to make enough to feed a crowd (about eight sandwiches), so I'd need a sizable cut. Chuck roast was too chewy. Top round came in inconsistent shapes and was difficult to cook evenly. Tenderloin was too expensive. Eye round, a lean, inexpensive cut from the steer's hindquarters, proved to be just right.

We usually cook eye round at a low temperature to gently break down its connective tissue and make what can be a tough cut more tender. But at 275 degrees, it took well over an hour for the meat to get to medium-rare—not including the resting time required before slicing it. I wanted to speed things up. The answer was simple: Just by dividing the roast into two long strips, I was able to cook the meat in half the time.

Beef on weck aficionados (and they are plentiful, believe me) will tell you that the meat must be sliced very thin, which is not easy with a warm, soft, medium-rare roast (unless you own a meat slicer). I tried a few tricks to make this task easier, including letting the meat rest longer and even freezing the meat after cooking. Nothing worked.

I was at my wit's end when a colleague suggested something radical: Cook the roasts to medium instead of medium-rare. Skeptical (and reluctant), I let my next roasts reach 130 degrees. After they had a half-hour rest, I was delighted to find that the roasts were much easier to slice thin because the meat was firmer. And even my most discerning tasters deemed the medium beef flavorful and tender.

To complete my sandwich, I quickly threw together a jus based on the pan drippings and created an easy dump-and-stir horseradish sauce. But even with all the components put together, the sandwiches still lacked cohesion. At some restaurants in Buffalo where beef on weck is served, the roll is dipped quickly in jus before the sandwich is assembled. My tasters didn't love how this made the roll slightly soggy, but tossing the roast beef slices with some of the jus and horseradish before piling it on the rolls brought everything together.

I finally had meaty, salty, satisfying beef on weck sandwiches that were good enough to stand up to the genuine article.

Two keys to tender beef: Cook it past medium-rare to medium, and slice it as thinly as you can.

BEEF ON WECK SANDWICHES

Makes 8 sandwiches

Buy refrigerated prepared horseradish, not the shelf-stable kind. Note that the cooked beef must rest for 30 to 60 minutes before slicing.

HORSERADISH SAUCE

- **½ cup prepared horseradish, drained**
- **1 tablespoon sour cream**
- **1 tablespoon mayonnaise**

BEEF

- **1 (2- to 2½-pound) boneless eye-round roast, trimmed**
- **5 teaspoons vegetable oil**
- **Kosher salt and pepper**
- **2 teaspoons minced fresh thyme**
- **¼ cup prepared horseradish, drained**

JUS

- **1 onion, chopped fine**
- **1 teaspoon vegetable oil**
- **1 teaspoon cornstarch**
- **2½ cups beef broth**
- **1 sprig fresh thyme**

WECK

- **8 kaiser rolls, split**
- **2 teaspoons caraway seeds**
- **1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- **2 tablespoons water**
- **½ teaspoon cornstarch**

1. FOR THE HORSERADISH SAUCE: Combine horseradish, sour cream, and mayonnaise in bowl; set aside.

2. FOR THE BEEF: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 275 degrees. Cut roast in half lengthwise to make 2 even-size roasts. Rub each roast with 1 teaspoon oil and season each with 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, and 1 teaspoon thyme. Tie roasts with kitchen twine at 1-inch intervals.

3. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch ovensafe skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add both roasts and cook until browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer skillet to oven and cook until roasts register 130 degrees, 28 to 32 minutes. Transfer roasts to carving board, tent loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest for at least 30 minutes or up to 1 hour. Reserve skillet and any meat drippings. Increase oven temperature to 400 degrees.

4. FOR THE JUS: Return skillet with meat drippings to medium-high heat (skillet handle will be hot) and add onion and oil. Cook until onion is just softened, about 3 minutes, scraping up any browned bits. Whisk cornstarch into broth. Add broth mixture and thyme sprig to skillet and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until reduced by half and slightly thickened, about 7 minutes. Strain jus through fine-mesh strainer set over small saucepan; discard solids. Cover and keep warm.

5. FOR THE WECK: Place rolls on rimmed baking sheet. Combine caraway seeds and salt in bowl. Whisk water and cornstarch together in separate bowl. Microwave cornstarch mixture until consistency of glue, about 30 seconds. Brush cornstarch mixture on roll tops, then sprinkle with caraway mixture. Bake until caraway mixture is set and rolls are crusty, about 7 minutes.

6. Slice roasts against grain as thin as possible. Toss sliced meat, ⅓ cup jus, and horseradish together in bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste. Sandwich meat mixture in rolls (about ½ cup per roll). Serve with horseradish sauce and individual portions of jus for dipping.

The American Table
Doing "The Pan"

Cheyenne Joe's, depicted in the Buffalo Daily Courier.

Enterprising Buffalo saloon keeper Joe Gohn knew there'd be thirsty hordes at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition—"The Pan"—so he opened up a pub, The Delaware House, to capitalize on the traffic. To attract patrons, he set out a lunch buffet of beef sandwiches. The cost? Free. Like many pub owners, he hoped the cheap, salty snacks would help him sell more higher-margin drinks.

The Delaware House was just one of many new establishments to open in advance of The Pan. "They are popping up like frogs in a pond after a June rain," said *The Buffalo Express*. One was Cheyenne Joe's, a Western-themed saloon where the sign behind the bar advised: "If drinking interferes with your business then give up your business."

At least one person's visit to The Pan didn't pan out: President William McKinley. On September 6, McKinley crossed paths at the Pan with anarchist Leon Czolgosz, who fired two shots at the president from his revolver at close range. After McKinley died from his wounds on September 14, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt moved into the White House. Czolgosz took a seat on the electric chair just six weeks later.

AND ON THE SIDE: THE BEST DILL PICKLE SPEARS

With chefs and home cooks pickling everything in sight these days, we wondered if the quality of supermarket pickles had improved in recent years. Most supermarket pickles are what the industry calls "fresh packed," meaning they're made by soaking fresh cucumbers in vinegar and salt. The pickles are then either pasteurized, making them shelf-stable, or immediately packed in jars and refrigerated.

We tried three shelf-stable and two refrigerated products, all marketed as "kosher dill." Kosher, in this case, has nothing to do with Jewish dietary restrictions but denotes the presence of garlic, a common seasoning in Jewish deli pickles. We served all the spears, lightly chilled, to 21 America's Test Kitchen staffers.

Tasters could easily identify the shelf-stable spears, which were "atomic green," thanks to food coloring. They're gently cooked before packaging and thus have a "wilted" texture. The two refrigerated products took home top honors for their "fresher" taste and "more crisp" texture. Refrigerated pickles have a shorter shelf life, so they don't sit in their liquid as long and are much crunchier than the oversaturated shelf-stable pickles. Tasters also thought that most of the shelf-stable pickles had "off," "chemical" aftertastes.

Garlic was also important—these are kosher pickles, after all—and many bottom-ranked products use garlic powder instead of fresh garlic. Our winning product is one of only two to use real chopped garlic, and it was praised for its "peppery" spiciness and "bold" garlic flavor. (The other product with fresh garlic uses whole cloves, which didn't saturate the pickling liquid enough to be detected by tasters.)

Tasters deemed our winning product, extra-garlicky Boar's Head Kosher Dill Pickle Spears, the crispest and freshest spears of the bunch. Found in the refrigerated section of the supermarket, these "crunchy," "tart" spears are minimally processed and our top pick. –LAUREN SAVOIE

RECOMMENDED		TASTERS' NOTES
BOAR'S HEAD Kosher Dill Pickle Spears **Price:** $3.99 for 26 oz ($0.15 per oz) **Refrigerated:** Yes **Pasteurized:** No		Tasters thought that this refrigerated product was "pleasantly crisp," with "great snap" and a "clean," bright green color. These pickles were "slightly spicy," "very garlicky," and had the "homemade pickle flavor" that tasters loved.
CLAUSSEN Pickles, Kosher Dill Spears **Price:** $3 for 24 oz ($0.13 per oz) **Refrigerated:** Yes **Pasteurized:** No		"Sweet," "salty," and "a little spicy," this refrigerated product had the "familiar," "classic" pickle profile. Tasters thought that these slender spears had "perfect crunch," "crispy" skin, and "clean," "fresh" flavor.
MT. OLIVE Kosher Dill Spears **Price:** $2.79 for 24 oz ($0.12 per oz) **Refrigerated:** No **Pasteurized:** Yes		These thick wedges were "sweet and sour," with a "slight kick of pepper" and "supersalty" flavor. Though a few tasters thought that these shelf-stable, "juicy" spears were "mushy," most enjoyed their "crispy" skin and "smooth," "soft" core.
RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS		
FARMER'S GARDEN BY VLASIC Kosher Dill Spears **Price:** $3.99 for 26 oz ($0.15 per oz) **Refrigerated:** No **Pasteurized:** Yes		While accents of carrots, red peppers, and whole garlic cloves lent this shelf-stable pickle an attractive appearance, tasters thought that the pickles were "too seedy," "wilted," and "slightly mushy." "Feels like these cucumbers have been sitting around too long."
NOT RECOMMENDED		
VLASIC Kosher Dill Spears **Price:** $3.29 for 24 oz ($0.14 per oz) **Refrigerated:** No **Pasteurized:** Yes		This shelf-stable pickle was the "least fresh of the bunch," with an "atomic green" color and "slimy," "oversaturated" interior. Most tasters also noted a "chemical," "soapy" aftertaste and a "cloyingly sweet" flavor.

Cracker-Crusted Fried Chicken

Crunchy cracker crumbs can make a great fried chicken coating. But it took three weeks in the test kitchen and 60 pounds of chicken to get the texture just right. BY DIANE UNGER

FEW KITCHEN TASKS are as satisfying as frying chicken. I'm fascinated by the way the oil sounds (like a light spring rain), and I love the way the skin crackles and the juices burst out when you take your first bite. I've developed many fried chicken recipes in the test kitchen, so when I read about a style of fried chicken coated in cracker crumbs, my curiosity was aroused. But I had a feeling that perfecting this recipe wasn't going to be a walk in the park.

I gathered a handful of recipes, placed an initial order for 30 pounds of chicken parts, and began brining, coating, and frying. My tasters and I learned a lot from this first sampling of recipes: Most produced dull, underseasoned chicken. And the crumb coatings were problematic. Those that called for straight-up saltine crumbs yielded unpleasantly hard shells covering the chicken, while crumbs that were tossed with butter made for greasy and soggy fried chicken. But one recipe, which called for a combination of crushed saltines and flour, produced a crust that was crisp and golden. The meat wasn't very flavorful, but at least I had a starting point.

I decided to work on the cracker-crumb coating first and then deal with the flavor-challenged chicken itself. Instead of finely grinding the crackers in a food processor, which basically created a powder, I put the crackers in a plastic bag and crushed them with a rolling pin to create slightly coarser crumbs that I hoped would highlight the subtle flavor of the crackers. To make the coating even crispier, I replaced some of the all-purpose flour with cornstarch and added a teaspoon of baking powder for a lighter, cracklier crunch. A hefty 2 teaspoons of ground black pepper ensured that the coating had a nice little kick.

Now for the chicken. The test kitchen often turns to brining (submerging the chicken in a saltwater solution for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours) to keep chicken moist during frying. I wanted this chicken to be highly seasoned, so I added soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, cayenne pepper, and some granulated garlic to the brine. After the chicken parts had spent a few hours in the brine, I thoroughly dried them, coated them in my cracker-crumb mixture, let them sit for about a half-hour to allow the crackers to adhere, and then fried up a batch.

Irregularly shaped saltine crumbs help create an extra-crunchy coating.

Anticipation mounted as I lowered five pieces of chicken into my pot of hot oil and waited patiently for them to cook through to golden brown (which took about 14 minutes). While the first batch cooled, I fried the last five pieces and then called my eager tasters.

Success. The chicken skin was rendered, the coating was crisp, and the meat was juicy and seasoned down to the bone.

TEST KITCHEN TIP **Frying Oil: Fry, and Fry Again**

After dinner's done, you're left with a pot full of used cooking oil. Now what? Save it for another round or two. While overused oil can impart rancid flavors, gently used oil (used once or twice) produces exceptionally crisp, golden foods.

If you don't want to save all your used oil after frying chicken, you can approximate that in-between stage this way: Filter just a few cups of used oil through a strainer lined with several layers of cheesecloth and refrigerate it in an airtight container. When it's time to fry your next batch of chicken, mix 1 cup of used, strained oil with 5 cups of fresh.

CRACKER-CRUSTED FRIED CHICKEN Serves 4

Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more. This recipe requires brining the chicken for at least 1 hour before coating

- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoons granulated garlic
- 3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half crosswise, drumsticks, thighs, and/or wings), trimmed
- 36 square saltines (1 sleeve)
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 3 quarts peanut or vegetable oil

1. Whisk 1½ quarts cold water, 2 tablespoons salt, Worcestershire, soy sauce, cayenne, and granulated garlic together in large container until salt dissolves. Add chicken, cover, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours

2. Place saltines in 1 gallon zipper lock bag, seal, and crush to medium fine crumbs with rolling pin (you should have about 1 cup). Transfer crumbs to large bowl and whisk in flour, cornstarch, baking powder, 2 teaspoons pepper, and ½ teaspoon salt until combined.

3. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Set second wire rack in second rimmed baking sheet and line half of rack with triple layer of paper towels. Working with 1 piece at a time, remove chicken from brine and transfer to saltine mixture, pressing firmly so coating adheres to chicken. Transfer coated chicken to prepared rack (without paper towels). Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.

4. Add oil to large Dutch oven until it measures about 2 inches deep and heat over medium high heat to 350 degrees. Add half of chicken to hot oil and fry until breasts register 160 degrees and drumsticks/thighs/wings register 175 degrees, 13 to 16 minutes. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 300 and 325 degrees. Transfer chicken to paper towel–lined side of second wire rack to drain on each side for 30 seconds, then move to unlined side of rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining chicken. Serve.

Lemon and Herb Potato Salad

Forget the mayonnaise. An herbed vinaigrette makes it light and fresh.

BY CHRISTIE MORRISON

MOST RECIPES FOR potato salad call for little more than cooked potatoes and mayonnaise (with some hard cooked eggs, chopped celery, or pickles sometimes thrown in). I'm a fan of this creamy and satisfying combination, but sometimes you want a lighter, fresher approach. Cooked potatoes tossed with vinaigrette (common in French or Austrian potato salads) have an added springtime bonus: With no eggy mayo that could spoil in the sun, they're well suited to picnics and warm weather events

I wanted firm but tender chunks of potato that would retain their shape once dressed and not clump up in a starchy blob. Waxy red potatoes are lower in starch than fluffy russets and, unpeeled, cut a more colorful figure than Yukon Golds. But even the red potatoes began to break down as they neared the end of cooking, giving off the starch I was trying to avoid. How could I get tender potatoes without all the starch?

In a word, science. During testing for prior recipes, the test kitchen has learned that when pectin in potatoes begins to dissolve during cooking, it causes the cell walls to break down and release starch. Adding acid to the cooking water slows down this process, resulting in slightly firmer potatoes and less starch. After a few tests, I found that 2 tablespoons of vinegar added to the potato cooking water was just enough to minimize the starch without prolonging the cooking time. My potatoes were tender but held their shape when tossed with vinaigrette.

About that vinaigrette: I didn't want the supersharp variety that leaves the insides of your cheeks aching or a sweet one that covered up the subtle, earthy potato flavors. Lemon juice, instead of vinegar, sharpened the dressing just enough without being harsh and, along with a bit of lemon zest, added citrus pop. Extra-virgin olive oil provided nice richness. To make sure that the dressing penetrated the potatoes, I tossed 2 tablespoons of the vinaigrette with the drained but still hot potatoes before spreading the cooked spuds onto a baking sheet to cool. Once the potatoes came to room temperature, I added the rest of the vinaigrette and some chopped onion for bite, and I tossed it all with fragrant herbs: tarragon, parsley, and chives (added last to preserve their fresh flavors). Two tablespoons of capers added a briny note.

You can mix up the herbs in this salad if you like: Try it with basil, cilantro, and mint

LEMON AND HERB RED POTATO SALAD Serves 8

To rinse the onion, place it in a fine-mesh strainer and run it under cold water. This removes some of the onion's harshness. Drain, but do not rinse, the capers here

- 3 pounds red potatoes, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar
- Salt and pepper
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest plus 3 tablespoons juice
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup finely chopped onion, rinsed
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh tarragon
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons capers, minced

1. Combine potatoes, 8 cups water, vinegar, and 2 tablespoons salt in Dutch oven and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium and cook at strong simmer until potatoes are just tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, whisk lemon zest and juice, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Slowly whisk in oil until emulsified, set aside.

3. Drain potatoes thoroughly, then transfer to rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle 2 tablespoons dressing over hot potatoes and toss gently until evenly coated. Let potatoes cool, about 30 minutes, stirring once half way through cooling.

4. Whisk dressing to recombine and stir in onion, tarragon, parsley, chives, and capers. Add cooled potatoes to dressing and stir gently to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Bierock Casserole

Bierocks—handheld buns filled with beef, cabbage, and cheese—are definitely tasty, but they take a long time to make. We wanted the same great flavors in casserole form. BY ASHLEY MOORE

BEEF-FILLED BIEROCKS, ALSO known as runsas, are common in the high plains country of Nebraska, Kansas, and eastern Colorado, where descendants of Eastern European immigrants settled in the late 19th century to ranch and farm The handheld buns are made from a soft, sweet, yeasted dough stuffed with a meaty, gooey filling of ground beef, onions, cabbage, and cheese.

Our June/July 2012 recipe for Bierocks is a popular one in the test kitchen—the last time I made the buns, I had a line of fellow cooks eager to grab one for lunch. But mixing and kneading dough, letting it rise for an hour, splitting it into individual buns and stuffing each one, and then letting them rise for yet another hour before baking was too much for a weeknight supper Was there an easier route?

I found several existing recipes for bierock casserole, which seemed like a great idea. But after making a few versions, I identified a significant problem the dough itself. While some had the subtle sweetness that characterizes individual bierocks, none had the tender texture that I wanted. What's more, none were quick enough. A colleague recommended using the dough from our Quicker Cinnamon Buns (October/November 2013) since it has a soft texture and faint sweetness and needs only 30 minutes to rise—just the right amount of time to prepare the filling It worked perfectly

The filling required only some minor tweaks. I increased the amount of beef and shredded green cabbage from our original recipe. After cooking the beef, cabbage, and onions together in a Dutch oven, I drained off the extra liquid with a colander. After a few tests using different types of cheeses (including Colby Jack, Monterey Jack, and cheddar), I settled on American cheese for its flavor and meltability. A bit of yellow mustard added a sharp note

I allowed the filling to cool in the casserole dish for 10 minutes before draping the rolled dough over the top and crimping the edges. For ventilation, and to prevent any unwanted overflows, I made three rows of three slits. After brushing the top with egg for a shiny finish, I slid the casserole into the oven. Just 20 minutes later, I had another line of tasters with forks at the ready

BIEROCK CASSEROLE Serves 6 to 8

We prefer whole milk here, but reduced-fat milk will also work in the dough

DOUGH

- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups (10 ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1¾ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

FILLING

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 pounds 85 percent lean ground beef
- 1 small head green cabbage, cored and chopped fine (8 cups)
- 2 onions, chopped fine
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 6 ounces American cheese, chopped
- 2 tablespoons yellow mustard

- 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water

1. **FOR THE DOUGH:** Microwave ¼ cup milk in small bowl until it registers 110 degrees, 15 to 20 seconds. Stir in yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar and let sit until mixture is bubbly, about 5 minutes

2. Whisk flour, baking powder, salt, and remaining 5 teaspoons sugar together in large bowl. Stir in melted butter, yeast mixture, and remaining ¾ cup milk until dough forms (dough will be sticky). Transfer dough to well-floured counter and knead until smooth ball forms, about 2 minutes. Transfer dough to greased large bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let rise for 30 minutes.

3. **FOR THE FILLING:** Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add beef, cabbage, onions, 2½ teaspoons salt, and 2½ teaspoons pepper; cover and cook for 5 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook, breaking up beef with spoon, until beef is no longer pink and cabbage is wilted, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in flour until fully incorporated and cook for 1 minute. Let beef mixture drain in colander set in sink for 5 minutes

4. Return beef mixture to now-empty pot and stir in cheese and mustard. Season with salt and pepper to taste

The sweet dough and savory beef are balanced by a couple of tablespoons of tangy yellow mustard in the filling.

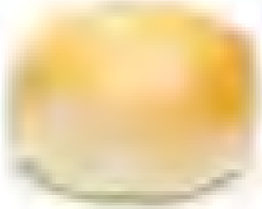
Transfer filling to 13 by 9 inch baking dish and let cool for 10 minutes.

5. Roll dough into 18 by 12 inch rectangle. Brush rim and interior lip of dish with egg wash (reserve remainder). Loosely roll dough around rolling pin and unroll it over dish. Trim overhanging dough to ½ inch beyond lip of dish. Fold overhanging dough inward so folded edge is flush with inner edge of dish. Crimp dough evenly around edge of dish with your fingers

6. Brush top of casserole liberally with remaining egg wash. Using paring knife, cut nine 1 inch vent holes in dough. Bake until crust is golden brown and filling is bubbling, about 20 minutes Transfer casserole to wire rack and let cool for 20 minutes. Serve

Handheld Origins

Our inspiration for this casserole comes from traditional bierocks, also called runsas. These single-serving buns are individually stuffed with meat filling



LITTLE PACKAGES
Sweet on the outside, savory within.

Garden State Health Salad

This sweet-and-sour salad became popular at the Claremont Diner in Verona, New Jersey. The diner is gone, but we wanted the salad to live on. BY DIANE UNGER

HEALTH SALAD, ALSO known as Claremont Salad, is a deli side dish that's been ubiquitous at storefront delis and roadside diners in New Jersey and other parts of the Northeast for decades. The mayo-less cabbage and vegetable slaw tossed in a sweet and sour dressing benefits from aging in the refrigerator to tenderize the sturdy vegetables and marry the flavors. You'll find variations of this salad using many vegetable combinations, but the common denominators are green cabbage, green bell pepper, carrot, and onion. The sour component of the salad comes from white or cider vinegar. The sweet? Sugar.

After trying a few existing recipes, I was left wondering, why is this called "health" salad? The examples I produced were hardly what I would deem healthy. Some were sickeningly sweet (calling for upwards of ½ cup of sugar) and some surprisingly oily (with anywhere from ½ to 1 cup of vegetable oil). This salad had potential, but I needed to figure out how to get the right balance of sweet, sour, and salty.

I cobbled together a recipe using the components we liked from a handful of recipes in my initial test. First I chopped the cabbage coarsely (tasters didn't care for the shredded coleslaw cut that's sometimes used); then I added thinly sliced onion, carrot, green bell pepper, and a cucumber, which tasters preferred peeled, halved, and sliced thin.

Moving on to the dressing, I tried different combinations and proportions of cider vinegar and distilled white vinegar before settling on distilled white vinegar diluted with water (¾ cup vinegar to ¼ cup water) to mellow its acidity. To that, I added ¼ cup of sugar to balance the sourness. Some garlic, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes, plus 2 tablespoons of olive oil, completed the dressing. Heating the dressing before pouring it over the vegetables ensured that the sugar was fully dissolved and that the dressing soaked into the vegetables.

A hallmark of health salad preparation is letting it sit in its dressing to soften up the vegetables and even out the flavors. I tested letting the dressed salad sit in the fridge for a range of times, from 1 hour up to six days (which several recipes advised in order to "tenderize" the vegetables). I found that 2 hours was the minimum for tender vegetables, and the salad was just fine for up to three days before the texture of the vegetables started to deteriorate.

The keys to this deli-style salad—which can be made three days ahead—are a properly balanced dressing and a nice rest

HEALTH SALAD Makes 8 cups

This salad needs to be refrigerated for at least 2 hours before serving.

- ½ head green cabbage, halved, cored, and chopped coarse (5 cups)
- 1 green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, quartered, and sliced thin crosswise
- 1 onion, halved and sliced thin
- 1 cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, and sliced thin
- 1 carrot, peeled and sliced thin
- ¾ cup distilled white vinegar
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Combine cabbage, bell pepper, onion, cucumber, and carrot in large bowl. Bring vinegar, water, sugar, oil, garlic, 2 teaspoons salt, and pepper flakes to simmer in medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve sugar.

2. Once simmering, pour vinegar mixture over vegetables and stir to combine. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve. (Health salad will keep, refrigerated, for up to 3 days.)

The American Table
Throwing Nickels

Horn & Hardart was already a successful Philadelphia restaurant chain when it opened its first automat in 1902. The concept, which originated in Germany, was simple but revolutionary: You'd select your lunch from a wall of dishes displayed behind tiny glass doors (think mailboxes), drop a nickel or a dime into the slot, unlatch the door, and pull out a serving of beef noodle casserole, "health" salad, or pumpkin pie.

No nickel? No problem. Just visit the "nickel thrower" seated behind the glass-paned booth up front. "You had to knock them off five at a time," said former nickel thrower Anne Downey. "They would put [a quarter] down and you would just flip off five nickels." The nickel throwers "became a fascination," according to Lorraine B. Diehl and Marianne Hardart, authors of *The Automat*.

On July 2, 1912, when the first Manhattan location opened, customers slipped 8,693 nickels into the slots. The chain grew rapidly; by the 1940s, there were more than 80 Horn & Hardart automats and a host of competitors. "There is no trick to selling a poor item cheaply," cofounder Joe Horn said. "The real trick is to sell a good item cheaply." But as the century progressed, changing tastes doomed the concept; the last Horn & Hardart automat closed in 1991.

Photograph: Bereniice Abbot. Courtesy of New York Public Library

Chicken California

James Beard championed this turn-of-the-century dish from California's San Joaquin Valley, but his recipe left some mysteries to solve. BY MORGAN BOLING

One ingredient you can't see—cornmeal—adds subtle sweetness and helps thicken the sauce of this unusual braise

In the test kitchen, when we have a sauce that needs thickening, we summon the usual suspects cornstarch, roux, flour. So when I recently discovered a recipe in which the final sauce was thickened with cornmeal, I was skeptical. But given that the recipe was from the illustrious James Beard, one of the giants of American cooking, I knew that I needed to try it.

In his landmark 1972 cookbook *American Cookery*, Beard describes the recipe, Chicken California, as "an excellent example of California ranch cookery at the beginning of the century." It calls for coating chicken pieces in cornmeal and braising them in a flavorful sauce made with chili powder, a few warm spices like cumin and coriander, and red wine. Beard then uses a cornmeal slurry (a mixture of water and cornmeal) to thicken the sauce before finishing the dish with chopped green olives, toasted almonds, and fresh cilantro. The eclectic list of ingredients evokes California's deep and diverse agricultural history, but could cornmeal really bring them all together?

Preparing the recipe the first time produced a deeply flavorful dish with disparate tastes and textures that, while enticing, called for some refinement. Though intimidating to consider rethinking a recipe from an American culinary pioneer (and a man who helped develop the culinary techniques I learned at school), my tasters and I had a few ideas for how to update the dish.

I started with the part that initially made me do a double take: the cornmeal thickener, which felt gritty in the final sauce. Since there was no exact measurement for how much should be added (Beard's list just calls for "cornmeal for thickening"), I overdid it with ½ cup and my sauce felt both gritty and sludgy. I cut back the amount of cornmeal by half and tried soaking it in water for 20 minutes to soften the grains. This helped, but I was hoping to avoid the 20 minute wait.

One of my tasters suggested that I add the cornmeal slurry early on in the cooking process so that it could soften while the chicken braised. When I tried this, it cut back the grittiness of the sauce considerably. But it also muted the corn flavor. I decided to try skipping the slurry and adding the cornmeal early on, as I built the braising liquid, toasting it alongside the chili powder. After a few side by side tests I found that 2 tablespoons of cornmeal was the perfect amount to properly thicken—and flavor—the sauce with no residual grit.

With the cornmeal thickener figured out, I wanted to focus on flavors, of which Beard's original recipe has many. His hefty dose of chili powder with cumin seed, coriander, and nutmeg was invigorating but threatened to overpower the dish. I wanted to balance the flavors to allow the unexpected almonds and olives to come through more clearly. Because most chili powders contain a mix of spices (not just dried chiles), I ditched Beard's original additions of cumin, coriander, and nutmeg. Tasters unanimously agreed that they liked this edited version, which still produced a complex, multilayered dish.

A tablespoon of brown sugar (which we preferred to white sugar) added a very subtle balancing note of sweetness, and a generous sprinkle of cilantro introduced a welcome brightness. All the elements came together for a final dish that was greater than the sum of its seemingly disparate parts.

One thing I knew I couldn't improve on was Beard's recommendation at the end of his recipe: "Beer goes well with this menu."

CHICKEN CALIFORNIA

Serves 4 to 6

Serve over rice or mashed potatoes

- 3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half crosswise, drumsticks, and/or thighs), trimmed
- Salt and pepper
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons cornmeal
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 1¼ cups chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon packed brown sugar
- ½ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ½ cup pitted green olives, chopped coarse
- ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro

1. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Place ½ cup cornmeal in shallow dish. Dredge chicken in cornmeal, shaking off excess, transfer to plate. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add half of chicken and cook until evenly browned, about 3 minutes per side; transfer to plate. Wipe out pot with paper towels and repeat with 2 tablespoons oil and remaining chicken. Wipe out pot.

2. Return now-empty pot to medium heat, add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and onion, and cook until soft, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, chili powder, and remaining 2 tablespoons cornmeal and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in wine and cook until reduced by half, about 3 minutes.

3. Add broth, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and chicken and bring to boil. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes. Flip chicken and continue to simmer, covered, until breasts register 160 degrees and thighs/drumsticks register 175 degrees, 8 to 10 minutes longer.

4. Off heat, transfer chicken to shallow casserole dish. Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Pour sauce over chicken and sprinkle with almonds, olives, and cilantro. Serve.

The American Table
Shaking That (Almond) Tree

After the Gold Rush of 1849, it became clear that California's real pay dirt wasn't in the Sierra mountains, but in the rich soil of California's Central Valley—San Joaquin Valley to the south, Sacramento Valley to the north. Immigrants from Russia, Italy, Armenia, Germany, Japan, Mexico, China, and many other parts of the world streamed into the area and began to plant in the floodplains around Stockton, nut-tree groves—walnuts first, then almonds—took shape.

The nut harvest was modest for decades, mostly because of the manpower needed to get the things off the trees. Early farmers employed schoolkids to climb, pick and toss; later, rubber mallets were used to whack the trees and knock out seeds.

But in the 1940s a war-induced labor shortage inspired Robert Paul Barton of Escalon to develop the first mechanical harvester, the Barton Cable Shaker. The contraption drove up to a tree, grasped the trunk, and vigorously shook it until the nuts fell in a shower onto a net spread on the ground. Within a decade, versions of the Shaker had transformed the process across the valley, making almonds easier to pick. Production skyrocketed and prices fell.

KEY INGREDIENTS: West Coast in the Kitchen

The disparate ingredients in chicken California reflect the astonishing variety of crops grown in the Central Valley. To make the most of each component, we add them in various stages during the recipe—chili powder and red wine go in early, so their earthy flavors meld throughout the dish, while olives, almonds, and cilantro go in later to finish things off with fresher textures and flavors.

ECLECTIC MIX
Careful timing ensures that these flavors cooperate.

Braised Spring Vegetables

It's an unlikely scenario—early season vegetables cooked at a low simmer to amplify their fresh flavors—but it works.

BY AARON FURMANEK

The tender, tasty braised radishes in this dish are a revelation.

PRIMED to make the most of their freshness, seasonal spring vegetables like asparagus and peas are often barely cooked. Others, like radishes, are usually served raw. But as many chefs know, cooking spring vegetables low and slow can actually produce a lively, warm side dish that brings out the distinct flavors of each individual vegetable while offering a bit of warmth on a still cool spring evening.

To start, I trimmed some radishes and dropped them into a Dutch oven with just over a cup of water. After a 5-minute simmer, they transformed from assertive and peppery to soft and sweet. Next into the pot went 2-inch lengths of asparagus, some sliced leeks and fennel, and then, about 5 minutes later, some frozen peas. (We love frozen peas in the test kitchen; of the vegetables available in the frozen foods section, they're among the most successful.) Adding the vegetables in intervals helped ensure that none would overcook.

After a few minutes, the broth was rich and the vegetables were lovely to look at. But the combination of flavors confounded my tasters' taste buds. The leeks were too pungent and stringy, and the fennel seemed bulky and intrusive. There were too many things in the pot. A few rounds of refinement left us with the true stars of the dish: asparagus, peas, and radishes.

I established a subtle savory base by sautéing some sliced shallot along with a bit of garlic, thyme sprigs, and red pepper flakes. In went the radishes and water, this time with some citrus zest for freshness, a bay leaf for depth, and some salt for seasoning. Next, some asparagus and, finally, the peas, which just needed to be brought to temperature. The vegetables were radiant, and the broth was invigorating and complex. A toss of chopped fresh tarragon was a final nod to spring.

BRAISED SPRING VEGETABLES

Serves 4

You can use ¼ teaspoon of dried thyme in place of the fresh sprigs.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 shallot, sliced into thin rings
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced thin
- 3 fresh thyme sprigs
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- 10 radishes, trimmed and quartered lengthwise
- 1¼ cups water
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest
- 1 bay leaf
- Salt and pepper
- 1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into 2-inch lengths
- 2 cups frozen peas
- 4 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon

1. Heat oil, shallot, garlic, thyme sprigs, and pepper flakes in Dutch oven over medium heat until shallot is just softened, about 2 minutes.

2. Stir in radishes, water, lemon zest, orange zest, bay leaf, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cover and cook until radishes can be easily pierced with tip of paring knife, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in asparagus and continue to cook, covered, until tender, 3 to 5 minutes.

3. Off heat, stir in peas and let sit, covered, until peas are heated through, about 5 minutes. Discard thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Stir in tarragon and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to shallow platter and serve.

Photograph: Dorothea Lange, Library of Congress

One-Pan Pork Chop Dinner

Pork chops and roasted vegetables pair well on the plate, but could we get them to cook together on the same baking sheet? BY CHRISTIE MORRISON

WE ARE ALWAYS looking for ways to streamline recipes to make life easier for the home cook. So a one pan meal of pork chops with roasted potatoes and carrots sounded great: simple, tasty, and easy to clean up. But once I lined up all the ingredients in the test kitchen, it quickly became clear that I'd have a few problems to solve.

The most obvious issue was cooking time: Thin pork chops cook in as little as 5 minutes, but even large, 1 inch thick, center cut, bone-in chops cook in only 10 to 15 minutes. Roasting vegetables to a soft, tender stage would require at least twice that time

My other problem was flavor: I knew before starting that browning the chops on the stovetop—which we often do to build flavor—didn't make sense here. I'd have to sear them first in an ovensafe skillet and then transfer them along with the vegetables to the oven. But four big pork chops and 2 pounds of vegetables (enough to feed four) wouldn't fit comfortably even in a large skillet. I'd have to come up with another way to add flavor

But for now, I'd focus on the cook ing time My plan was to partially roast the vegetables in the oven on a rimmed baking sheet (which promotes fast cooking and browning) and then add the large chops on top of the vegetables after about 30 minutes—and not use a skillet at all.

I tossed sliced Yukon Gold potatoes, coarsely cut carrots and fennel bulb, and a big handful of peeled garlic cloves with a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil and some minced fresh rosemary Then I dumped the mixture onto the baking sheet and slid it into the oven. After a few tests, I found that roasting at 450 degrees on the upper-middle rack allowed the vegetables to brown at such a pace that I didn't need to open the oven to stir them during cooking —a definite plus

While the vegetables were roast ing, I focused my attention on adding flavor to the main ingredient, the chops. Since stovetop searing was off the table, I tried rubbing the chops with sugar to see if that would help them brown in the oven, but it still took too long The chops were basically jerky by the time they picked up significant color. I decided instead to use a potent spice rub. I tried several combinations, and my tasters voted in favor of a fragrant blend of sweet paprika, coriander, salt, and pepper. This mix added a subtle but energetic pop of flavor to the pork and gave it an attractive color (thanks to the paprika). Now that the meat had some real flavor, I could work out the timing

After about 25 minutes in the oven, the vegetables were almost but not quite—tender. Working quickly, I bal anced the raw, spice-rubbed chops on top of the vegetables and returned the pan to the oven. Elevating the chops on top of the vegetables allowed air to circulate under the meat, which sped up the cooking. What's more, as the pork juices and seasonings dripped down onto the vegetables, they took on beautiful meaty flavors. The hot vegetables, in turn, helped speed up the cooking time of the chops; after just 10 to 15 minutes, the chops hit a perfect 140 degrees and the vegetables were nicely tender.

The chops and vegetables were well seasoned, but I wanted a jolt of fresh ness to tie the meat and vegetables together. I turned to common pantry ingredients—red wine vinegar, a bit of minced shallot, some extra virgin olive oil, and a little sugar for balance—and then whisked in a couple of tablespoons of fresh parsley and drizzled the bright green sauce over the finished dish.

This dish was delicious and easy, and done in 40 minutes of roasting just right for an easy weeknight supper.

A little paprika in the spice rub helps these chops develop nice color in the oven.

ONE-PAN PORK CHOPS AND ROASTED VEGETABLES

Serves 4

This recipe was developed using Diamond Crystal kosher salt. If you substitute table salt, reduce the amount of salt in each part of the recipe by half. Colavita Extra Virgin Olive Oil won our taste-test of supermarket extra-virgin oils

- 4 (10-ounce) bone-in center-cut pork chops, 1 to 1¼ inches thick, trimmed
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½-inch-thick slices
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 3-inch lengths, thick ends quartered lengthwise
- 1 fennel bulb, stalks discarded, bulb halved, cored, and cut into ½-inch-thick wedges
- 10 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 4 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- ⅛ teaspoon sugar

1. Adjust oven rack to upper middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Pat pork dry with paper towels and rub with 1 teaspoon oil. Combine 2 tea spoons salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, paprika, and coriander in small bowl. Season pork chops all over with spice mixture; set aside.

2. Toss potatoes, carrots, fennel, garlic, rosemary, 1 tablespoon oil, 1½ teaspoons salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper together in large bowl. Spread vegetables in single layer on rimmed baking sheet. Roast vegetables until just tender, about 25 minutes.

3. Carefully place pork chops on top of vegetables and return to oven. Roast until chops register 140 degrees and vegetables are fully tender, 10 to 15 minutes longer, rotating sheet half way through roasting.

4. Meanwhile, combine parsley, shallot, vinegar, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and remaining ¼ cup oil in bowl. Transfer vegetables and pork to platter and drizzle with vinaigrette. Serve

Pasta with Roasted Tomatoes

Slow-roasting tomatoes can take hours. We wanted the same deep flavors in a fraction of the time. BY AARON FJRMANEK

I KE PASTA TOSSED with regular tomato sauce as much as the next guy, but I get really excited at the thought of pasta with roasted tomatoes. Slow roasting tomatoes gives them a beautiful dimpled, caramelized look while also mellowing their sharp flavors into a soft, savory sweetness. But the usual method (roasting at a low temperature for an hour or two and then tossing with pasta) doesn't cut it for an easy weeknight pasta dinner. So I set out to create a recipe that produced rich, slow roasted tomato flavor, without the time commitment.

Regarding the main ingredient, I figured that cherry tomatoes would be a great choice since their small size means they cook quickly. Most recipes I found for roasted cherry tomatoes call for halving them and then cooking them at around 350 degrees for 40 to 50 minutes. Unfortunately, the tomatoes were inconsistently browned and sometimes overcooked with this method. I wanted to eliminate the guesswork and have sufficiently blistered tomatoes with deep flavor while keeping the oven time under 30 minutes.

For my next test, I tossed halved cherry tomatoes with several good glugs of extra virgin olive oil plus minced garlic, red pepper flakes, a little sugar, tomato paste (which is already concentrated and, thus, would help mimic long-cooked flavor), salt, and pepper and roasted them at 425 degrees for 20 minutes, thinking that the higher temperature would help the tomatoes achieve that trademark blistered skin. Instead, what I found was barely shriveled skin with only mild blistering and a soggy texture rather than concentrated sweetness.

My next thought was to preheat the baking sheet so that the tomatoes would start cooking immediately. This produced only slightly more blistering on the tomatoes, and nearly all their natural juices seeped out and evaporated—meaning I was losing lots of great flavor. These results didn't justify preheating the baking sheet, so I looked for other solutions.

I tried increasing the oven temperature in 25-degree increments to 450, 475, and 500 degrees. Blistering and browning improved at higher temperatures, but the tomatoes were drying out too much. Up to this point, I had been halving the tomatoes, but for the next test, I left them whole and repeated the test at the different oven temperatures. Not only did the recipe get easier—I no longer had to halve 3 pints of tomatoes—but the whole tomatoes blistered better than the halved tomatoes in my previous tests. And since the tomatoes held on to their juices longer, their flavorful liquid didn't evaporate, which made the finished dish taste even better.

But in finding a solution to the tomatoes, I created a problem with the garlic. Roasting tomatoes in a hotter-than-normal oven worked well for the tomatoes, but the garlic burned around the edges of the pan. So to ensure that the garlic wouldn't burn, I centered the tomatoes on the baking sheet and then placed the garlic in the middle of the tomatoes. This insulated the garlic enough so that it cooked, but didn't burn, during roasting.

Tossed with pasta, Parmesan, and some fresh basil, my roasted cherry tomatoes made for a fast, easy, delicious weeknight dinner that tasted like it took twice as long to prepare.

PASTA WITH ROASTED CHERRY TOMATOES

Serves 4

You will need 3 pints of cherry tomatoes for this recipe; you can use an equal amount of grape tomatoes. Linguine or capellini can be substituted for the spaghetti.

- **3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- **5 garlic cloves, sliced thin**
- **2 teaspoons tomato paste**
- **Salt and pepper**
- **1 teaspoon sugar**
- **¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- **1¾ pounds cherry tomatoes**
- **1 pound spaghetti**
- **½ cup coarsely chopped fresh basil**
- **1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup), plus extra for serving**

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Whisk 2 tablespoons oil, garlic, tomato paste, 1½ teaspoons salt, sugar, ¼ teaspoon pepper, and pepper flakes together in large bowl. Add tomatoes and toss to combine.

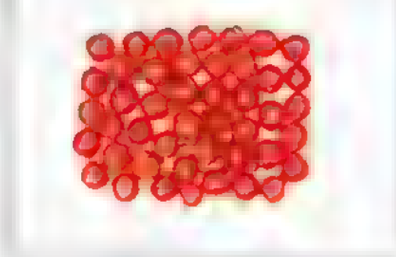
2. Transfer tomato mixture to prepared sheet and push tomatoes toward center of sheet. Scrape any remaining garlic and tomato paste from bowl into center of tomatoes. Bake until tomatoes are blistered and browned, about 20 minutes.

3. Bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve 1 cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot.

4. Add basil, roasted tomato mixture, ½ cup reserved cooking water, and remaining 1 tablespoon oil to pasta and toss to combine. Adjust consistency with remaining reserved cooking water as needed and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to serving dish and sprinkle with Parmesan. Serve, passing extra Parmesan separately.

For potent tomato flavor, we toss whole cherry tomatoes with a mixture that includes oil, garlic, tomato paste, and sugar before roasting them.

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE
An Orderly Arrangement



To prevent scorching, center the tomatoes on the sheet. Nestle the garlic slices in the tomato cluster.

Getting to Know Fruit Condiments

Can you tell a compote from a chutney? A jam from a preserve? It's easy to get confused since grocery store labels are often inexact. Here's the real deal when it comes to preserved fruit. BY CHRISTIE MORRISON

Preserves

BIG FRUIT

Fruit preserves are whole pieces or large chunks of fruit suspended in jelly or very thick syrup. Preserves tend to be less sweet than jams and jellies since they traditionally are made with equal parts fruit and sugar. The sugar plays an important role in helping the preserves set, though pectin is often used, too.

Jam

THICK AND CHUNKY

Jam is made from crushed or finely chopped fruit, which is cooked with pectin and sugar until thickened (jams traditionally contain more sugar than fruit by weight). We use jam as a filling for pastries and other desserts like our Peanut Butter and Jam Cake (**CooksCountry.com/peanutbutterandjamcake**).

Jelly

CRYSTAL CLEAR

Unlike preserves and jam, jelly contains no fruit bits; it almost always requires additional pectin to set up properly. The final ingredient is sugar, and like jams, jellies contain more sugar than fruit or fruit juice. We melted strawberry jelly and used it as a glaze in our recipe for Easy Fresh Fruit Tart (**CooksCountry.com/easyfruittart**).

Marmalade

RENDERED RIND

Marmalade almost always contains pieces of rind, which gives it a unique texture and also a faint bitterness. While marmalade was historically made with quinces, today it is usually made with sour Seville oranges; find our recipe at **CooksCountry.com/orangemarmalade**.

Fruit Curd

RICH SPREAD

Lemon curd gets all the glory, but curds—citrusy chilled custards—are also made with lime, orange, and grapefruit. It's important to cook the curd until it reaches 170 degrees; the egg yolks will thicken and cling to a spoon at that point (boiling will break the custard). The curd will continue to thicken as it cools.

Compote

SLOW POACHED

Usually served as part of a dessert, a compote is fresh or dried fruit slowly simmered in heavy sugar syrup with various spices and (sometimes) liqueur. Compotes made with the concentrated flavor of dried fruit can benefit from the addition of hearty herbs like rosemary and thyme.

Conserve

A LITTLE NUTTY

Similar to marmalade, a conserve is a thick, chunky, cooked condiment that often contains fruit rind. Due to the rind's high pectin content, conserves don't usually require added pectin. Conserves differ from marmalades, however, in that they usually contain nuts and dried fruits like raisins or currants.

Chutney

SHARP NOTE

Besides fruit, vinegar is the key ingredient in fruit chutneys. Spices and a touch of heat (chutneys vary in spiciness) add complexity. Though chutneys are usually cooked on the stovetop, we've also used the microwave to speed things up; check out our five easy fruit chutneys (**CooksCountry.com/5easychutneys**).

Fruit Butter

NOT TOO SWEET

Deeply flavored fruit butters require long cooking times to achieve their heavy consistency. Apples and pears make popular fruit butters; their sweetness is complemented by spices and sometimes apple cider or brandy. Try our apple butter (**CooksCountry.com/applebutter**) spread on toast or with cheese.

Relish

CHOPPED APPEAL

Unlike most of these other condiments, a fruit relish isn't necessarily cooked. Relishes can be sweet or savory and made of cooked, pickled, or raw ingredients. We process cranberries, a whole orange, and an apple with sugar and spices for our Cranberry-Apple-Orange Relish (**CooksCountry.com/CAOrelish**).

Mostarda

POTENT CONCOCTION

This sweet-savory Italian condiment features candied fruits preserved in a mustardy syrup. Mustard powder, seed, and oil can all be used. Try our homemade Peach Mostarda (**CooksCountry.com/peachmostarda**) alongside roasted meats, spooned over seared fish, or even added to a pan sauce.

Fruit Paste

STIFF STUFF

Fruit paste is most commonly made with pectin-rich quince or guava. Spanish *membrillo* and Portuguese *marmelada* are quince pastes that are cooked with sugar until dark and thick and then cooled until firm and sliceable. Fruit paste will keep in the refrigerator for up to six months.

Matzo Ball Soup

Tender dumplings and savory broth make a happy pair. Just don't introduce them too soon. BY DIANE JNGER

MATZO BALL SOUP is not complicated—it's simply chicken broth with vegetables and tender boiled dumplings made from matzo meal. But ask one lifelong fan what makes a perfect version and then ask another, and you'll find yourself with completely different answers.

One thing fans can agree on. Matzo balls—made from matzo meal (ground matzo), eggs, and water or broth—should be substantial but not too heavy Also, they must be poached in water and then added to the soup later; if you cook the balls directly in the soup, they leave it starchy and sludgy.

I tried five different existing recipes for matzo balls to get my bearings Some were heavy, dense sinkers Others were too delicate and fell apart.

The difference was in the ratio of the ingredients. After trial and error, I settled on 1 cup of matzo meal, four large eggs, and 5 tablespoons of water plus a bit of chopped, cooked onion and minced dill. After an hour's rest in the fridge, the dough was delicate but strong enough to hold together

I added 12 matzo balls to boiling, salted water. After 10, 20, 30, 40, and 50 minutes, I pulled a few of the balls out and set them aside to cool. I then cut them in half to compare their interiors. Thirty minutes yielded the most consistent texture from edge to center

Other ingredients in the soup vary by family tradition. Chicken broth, celery, onion, and carrot are common, but from there on it's a free-for-all; rutabaga, parsnip, parsley, dill, and thyme are all options. I was sold on parsnip after a side-by-side test revealed that even committed parsnip haters loved its subtle sweetness. To deepen the chicken flavor, I added two whole chicken legs, which I removed after they cooked through. (The chicken meat may be added back in if you like)

Backstory
Matzo, Squared

After establishing a Cincinnati matzo business in 1886, Dov Behr Manischewitz was eager to expand But traditionally round matzo was difficult to produce, pack, and ship. His lightbulb? Square matzo. The new shape produced less waste and was much easier to box up safely Except for a special-edition, World War I–era V-shaped matzo (for victory), nearly all factory-made matzo has been square ever since

MATZO BALL SOUP Serves 6

Chicken fat, or schmaltz, is available in the refrigerator or freezer section of most supermarkets. Note that the matzo batter needs to be refrigerated for at least 1 hour before shaping.

MATZO BALLS
- ¼ cup chicken fat (schmaltz) or vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh dill
- Salt and pepper
- 1 cup (4 ounces) matzo meal

SOUP
- 1 tablespoon chicken fat (schmaltz) or vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch chunks
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 parsnip, peeled and cut into ½-inch chunks
- Salt and pepper
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1½ pounds chicken leg quarters, trimmed
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh dill

Our flavorful matzo balls are tender and light but sturdy enough to hold together in the soup

1. **FOR THE MATZO BALLS:** Heat chicken fat in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add onion and cook until light golden brown and softened, about 5 minutes. Transfer onion to large bowl and let cool for 10 minutes (Do not clean pot.)

2. Whisk eggs, 5 tablespoons water, dill, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper into cooled onion mixture. Fold in matzo meal until well combined. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2 hours. (Batter will thicken as it sits)

3. Bring 4 quarts water and 2 tablespoons salt to boil in now-empty Dutch oven. Divide batter into 12 portions (about 1 heaping tablespoon each) and place on greased plate. Roll portions into smooth balls between your wet hands and return to plate. Transfer matzo balls to boiling water, cover, reduce heat to medium low and simmer until tender and cooked through, about 30 minutes.

4. Using slotted spoon, transfer matzo balls to colander and drain briefly. Transfer balls to clean plate and let cool to firm up, about 10 minutes Discard cooking water. (Do not clean pot.)

5. **FOR THE SOUP:** Meanwhile, heat chicken fat in large saucepan over medium heat until shimmering Add onion, carrots, celery, parsnip, and ½ teaspoon salt and cook, covered, until vegetables begin to soften, about 5 minutes Add broth, chicken, and dill and bring to boil. Cover, reduce heat to low, and cook until chicken is tender, 35 to 45 minutes. Remove from heat and transfer chicken to plate. (Chicken can be used for soup or reserved for another use. If adding to soup, shred with 2 forks into bite-size pieces, discard skin and bones.) Season soup with salt and pepper to taste.

6. Transfer soup to now-empty Dutch oven and bring to simmer over medium heat. Carefully transfer matzo balls to hot soup (along with shredded chicken, if using). Cover and cook until matzo balls are heated through, about 5 minutes Serve.

TO MAKE AHEAD

Soup and matzo balls can be fully cooked, cooled, and refrigerated separately in covered containers for up to 2 days. To serve, return soup to simmer over medium heat, add matzo balls, and cook until heated through, about 7 minutes

Breakfast Pizza

Eggs and bacon on a cheese pizza? Sounds like an excellent breakfast to us. If only we could get the crust to crisp and the eggs to cooperate. BY CECEL A JENKINS

The spiced cottage cheese melts in the oven, adding a creamy, savory base layer. You'd never know that it was cottage cheese

PIZZA, SIMPLY PUT, is bread with stuff on it. Who's to say that stuff can't be breakfast—bacon and eggs? I wanted to create a simple but satisfying breakfast pizza with a crisp crust, crunchy bacon, golden yolked eggs, and, instead of a red sauce, a creamy, breakfast friendly layer of cheese to kick off a weekend morning.

My challenge was to achieve a crisp, golden brown crust without overcooking the eggs—two contrasting goals.

Pizza parlors use specialized ovens that reach temperatures of 700 degrees or more to get perfect crisp chewy crust in a short burst of time, but I knew that I was limited to a home oven, where 500 degrees is the max. My coworkers suggested a pizza stone, which can help an oven maintain consistently high temperatures and help a home cook produce a crisp crust, but I didn't want to spend the extra time heating one up I was determined to do this on a baking sheet, but I was concerned that the store bought pizza dough I chose for convenience would take 15 minutes to cook much too long for the soft egg yolks I wanted.

But I had to start somewhere. So I pressed and rolled my pizza dough and patted it into a lightly oiled baking sheet. I sprinkled on some seasoned ricotta for creaminess, a few crumbles of cooked bacon, and some grated mozzarella. I carefully broke eggs on top and slid the whole thing into the oven to bake for 15 minutes. This routine was a bust: I had blond, flabby crust topped with chalky eggs.

I picked bits of crisp bacon off the pizza and considered my next move What if I prebaked a pizza with everything except the eggs, giving the cheese a chance to melt and the crust more time to crisp up, and then added the eggs for the last few minutes? Another fail. Cracking the eggs over partially melted cheese was nearly impossible They just slid right off

I took a step back and considered. Maybe it wasn't just a problem of timing, but of architecture, too. What if I built a solid foundation by parbaking the dough first? I'd do this on the lowest rack, closest to the heating element, to help ensure crispness. Then, after a few minutes, when the dough was puffed and firm, I would add my toppings. Introducing the shredded cheese at this stage allowed me to shape it into wells where I could safely nestle the eggs. With some finessing (and several pizzas), I determined that 5 minutes was all I needed to parbake the naked crust, plus another 9 to 12 minutes for the toppings.

I still faced a lingering texture problem. The ricotta that I'd hoped would create a creamy layer between the pizza crust and the other toppings was separating in the heat of the oven, becoming grainy and dry. A colleague offered a bold suggestion for a solution. cottage cheese.

Wait, what? I was not eager to vandalize this pizza with lumpy white glop But we've tried stranger things in the test kitchen, and I couldn't think of a compelling reason not to try it. Cottage cheese is cheese after all—and a creamy one at that.

I popped open a tub and spread ½ cup over the parbaked dough before piling on the other toppings. To my surprise and delight, the curds melted and the cottage cheese transformed into a creamy, silky layer, deftly tethering everything together. Even professed cottage cheese haters found this pizza, and the variations I created, irresistible

BREAKFAST PIZZA Serves 6

Small-curd cottage cheese is sometimes labeled "country-style." Room-temperature dough is much easier to shape than cold, so pull the dough from the fridge about 1 hour before you start cooking.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 6 slices bacon
- 8 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded (2 cups)
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)
- 4 ounces (½ cup) small-curd cottage cheese
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and pepper
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 pound store-bought pizza dough, room temperature
- 6 large eggs
- 2 scallions, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives

1. Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Grease rimmed baking sheet with 1 tablespoon oil.

2. Cook bacon in 12 inch skillet over medium heat until crisp, 7 to 9 minutes. Transfer to paper towel–lined plate, when cool enough to handle, crumble bacon. Combine mozzarella and Parmesan in bowl, set aside. Combine cottage cheese, oregano, ¼ teaspoon pepper, cayenne, and 1 tablespoon oil in separate bowl; set aside.

3. Press and roll dough into 15 by 11 inch rectangle on lightly floured counter, pulling on corners to help make distinct rectangle. Transfer dough to prepared sheet and press to edges of sheet. Brush edges of dough with remaining 1 tablespoon oil. Bake dough until top appears dry and bottom is just beginning to brown, about 5 minutes.

4. Remove crust from oven and, using spatula, press down on any air bubbles. Spread cottage cheese mixture evenly over top, leaving 1 inch border around edges. Sprinkle bacon evenly over cottage cheese mixture.

5. Sprinkle mozzarella mixture evenly over pizza, leaving ½ inch border. Create 2 rows of 3 evenly spaced small wells in cheese, each about 3 inches in diameter (6 wells total). Crack 1 egg into each well, then season each with salt and pepper.

6. Return pizza to oven and bake until crust is light golden around edges and eggs are just set, 9 to 10 minutes for slightly runny yolks or 11 to 12 minutes for soft-cooked yolks, rotating sheet halfway through baking.

7. Transfer pizza to wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes. Transfer pizza to cutting board. Sprinkle with scallions and chives and drizzle with extra oil. Slice and serve.

Building a Breakfast Pizza
For a crisp crust, we parbake the dough for 5 minutes, until the bottom is just beginning to brown. We then add the toppings, creating wells to keep the eggs in place.

Drop the eggs into the wells, one at a time.

CHORIZO AND MANCHEGO BREAKFAST PIZZA

Substitute 6 ounces chorizo sausage, halved lengthwise and cut into ½ inch slices, for bacon and 1 cup shredded Manchego cheese for Parmesan. Cook chorizo in 12 inch skillet over medium heat until lightly browned, 7 to 9 minutes. Let cool completely before proceeding.

SAUSAGE AND RED BELL PEPPER BREAKFAST PIZZA

Substitute 6 ounces bulk breakfast sausage for bacon and extra sharp cheddar for mozzarella. Combine sausage; 1 stemmed, seeded, and chopped red bell pepper; 1 chopped onion; and ¼ teaspoon salt in 12 inch skillet. Cook over medium heat, breaking up sausage with spoon, until sausage begins to brown and bell pepper and onion are translucent, about 6 minutes. Transfer to paper towel–lined plate. Let mixture cool completely before proceeding.

THE KINDEST CUT: WE TESTED 15 PIZZA CUTTERS TO FIND THE BEST

When our winning pizza wheel was discontinued, we promoted the runner-up, a classic 4-inch wheel from OXO. But we'd recently noticed more options on the market, so we decided to test them to see if any could make precise, even slices in a range of pizza styles while also being comfortable, safe, and easy to clean.

We started with 15 cutters in five different styles, priced from $9.99 to $37.95, and an easy test: thin-crust cheese pizzas. We chose the six best cutters—two handled wheels, one hand wheel, a scissor-style cutter, one that resembles a sharp-sided pie server, and one long straight blade—and compared them cutting pepperoni pizza, Sicilian pizza, deep-dish pizza, and pizzas loaded with toppings.

The straight blade cutter couldn't get through crusts, and testers had to rock it back and forth, which battered the toppings, cheese, sauce, and crust into a messy pulp.

The hand wheel was disappointing, too. It worked on the thin crusts, but with bulkier pizzas its wheel swept food up under the case and testers had to disassemble it to clean it out, a dicey task with a wet, soapy blade.

The pie server–shaped cutter and the scissors were both sharp and easy to use. The pie server didn't have a place to brace a second hand when we needed more force, so we docked points. But the scissors sliced through even deep-dish pizza with ease. The downside: Both required testers to make a series of shorter cuts instead of one long continuous slice, which made for wonky slices.

Finally, we turned back to the classic handheld wheels. We evaluated the top two and found one annoying to clean (its fixed case trapped toppings).

The best was our old favorite, the OXO Good Grips 4" Pizza Wheel ($12.99). It had a sharp wheel and a comfortable handle and was easy to clean. Read the full story and chart at **CooksCountry.com/may15**

—HANNAH CROWLEY

	CRITERIA		TESTERS' NOTES
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED			
OXO Good Grips 4" Pizza Wheel **Price:** $12.99 **Model:** 26681 **Style:** Handled wheel **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★★★ ★★★ ★★★	This wheel did it all—it was comfortable to hold and allowed for a powerful grip. Its streamlined design didn't trap food, and it still looked brand new after 10 rounds in the dishwasher. Its blade was sharp and visible for precise, straight cuts. The blade was tall, too: at 4 inches, so it rolled right over stacked toppings and towering crusts with ease.
RECOMMENDED			
DREAMFARM Scizza **Price:** $24.04 **Model:** DFSC2010 (Black) **Style:** Scissor **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★★ ★★★ ★★★	With their extra-long blades, these pizza scissors were sharp and exact, even with saucy and cheesy deep-dish pizza and heavy toppings. They were easy to use and clean but cut somewhat crookedly because you have to make multiple cuts to get across the pizza. However, for easy and tidy (albeit slightly crooked) slices, they were great.
RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS			
KUHN RIKON Flexi Slice and Serve **Price:** $20 **Model:** 22877 **Style:** Pie server **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★★ ★★ ★★★	This cutter was sharp and made clean, precise cuts, but they weren't straight because you have to make multiple cuts to get across the pizza. And testers wanted a place to brace a second hand. Because this model lacked the smooth forward motion of a wheel, we needed more force.
NOT RECOMMENDED			
TRUDEAU Stress Less Pizza Cutter **Price:** $14.95 **Model:** 0990012 **Style:** Handled wheel **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★½ ★★★ ★	This cutter had a great grip, but it wasn't very sharp and it struggled to get through most crusts. Its wheel pulled food up under its hood and the hood wasn't removable, so cheese and sauce were stranded and impossible to reach while cleaning.
MICROPLANE Pizza Cutter **Price:** $11.95 **Model:** 48105 **Style:** Hand wheel **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★★ ★★ ★½	This hand wheel had a tall handle that was too far from the wheel and felt unsteady—"like riding a unicycle," said one tester. Its blade was shorter and struggled to get through deep-dish crust. And while its wheel snapped out for easier cleaning, it was still an extra step.
PIZZACRAFT Soft Grip Handled Rocking Pizza Cutter **Price:** $19.99 **Model:** PMO213 **Style:** Straight blade **Dishwasher-Safe:** No	**Cutting** **Comfort** **Cleanup**	★½ ★★ ★★	This was the most comfortable and sharp straight blade but it still didn't work very well. The blade wasn't sharp enough to neatly sever any of the crusts on the first try so testers had to rock it back and forth again and again which mashed the cheese and sauce and made ragged, uneven slices.

Butter Fan Rolls

These multilayered buns are more than cute—they pack an outsize punch of buttery flavor. But they're very particular about one thing: location. BY CRISTIN WALSH

IF EVER A roll was aptly named, it's the butter fan roll: buttery layers of yeasty bread fanned out like, well, a fan—designed to be fancy enough for a dinner party but begging to be pulled apart and slathered with butter and jam for breakfast, too. After seeing these cute, tender, buttery little buns in bread baskets and bakery store windows throughout the Northeast, I set out to make my own homemade version

Just looking at them, I had a feeling these rolls would take some doing—after all, you don't get such striking, layered, fanned out mini loaves like these without a little countertop construction work. But how, exactly, is this unique shape achieved? I turned to a handful of existing recipes to find out.

After spending an afternoon in the kitchen, I had a wide range of rolls to sample. Some were tiny and tightly stacked. Others were big and floppy, with wings rather than fans. Some had robust buttery flavor, while others were bland. Some were soft and cakey, others dry and almost crunchy. But all followed a similar procedure: Mix and briefly knead the dough and let it rise once. Then punch down the dough, roll it out, cut it into strips, stack the strips, nestle them into muffin tins, let the dough rise again, and bake them off

> What makes a great muffin tin? Read our testing story—and see our winner—at **CooksCountry.com/muffintins.**

This all sounds like a lot of work, and they do take some attention, but butter fan rolls aren't nearly as taxing or complicated as their appearance led me to expect.

Where I tripped up, however, was in the baking. My early experiments became games of chance: I produced rolls that were sometimes undercooked in the middle, sometimes overcooked at the ends, often too brown on the bottom, at times soggy in the center—never perfect. Having nailed many dinner rolls in my day, I was vexed.

The beautiful fanned out shape that defines these rolls was creating a problem of texture and consistency. I wanted soft, tender rolls that were completely cooked throughout, with faintly crisp—not crunchy—tips. After a few experiments baking the rolls on the center rack of the oven at a range of temperatures (I tried 325, 350, and 375 degrees), and for a range of times (I tried 12, 15, and 18 minutes), I just couldn't crack the consistency code. When the oven was too hot, I'd have crisp tips but overcooked rolls. When it was too cool, I'd have nicely baked rolls but with soft tips.

Because they're made with plenty of butter and baked in a muffin tin, these rolls pick up lots of flavorful browning in the oven

Setting aside questions of temperature, I focused on location, moving the oven rack from the middle position to the upper middle position. Placing the muffin tins just a bit farther from the heating element allowed the rolls to cook through a bit more gently, while the radiant heat reflected from the roof of the oven created the lightly crisp edges I was looking for. I'd found the sweet spot.

Satisfied, but still curious, I wanted to try one more adjustment for convenience's sake. Even though these buns are sometimes called Yankee buttermilk rolls, I couldn't help wondering whether the buttermilk was really necessary. Could these rolls be made with regular whole milk, or even skim?

Answer: Yes in both cases. In fact, my tasters had to work hard to discern any more than a very slight difference. When pressed, they preferred the slightly less tangy flavor of the rolls made with whole milk.

BUTTER FAN ROLLS

Makes 12 rolls

Do not overflour the counter when rolling out the dough in step 3, and use a bench scraper to square off the edges of the rectangle. Make sure to plan ahead. This dough takes about 3 hours to rise before baking.

- ¾ cup warm milk (110 degrees)
- ¼ cup (1¾ ounces) sugar
- 1 large egg plus 1 large yolk, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 3½ cups (17½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces and softened, plus 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1. In bowl of stand mixer, combine milk, sugar, egg and yolk, and yeast and let sit until foamy, about 3 minutes. Add flour and salt. Fit stand mixer with dough hook and knead on medium low speed until dough is shaggy, about 2 minutes

2. With mixer running, add softened butter 1 piece at a time until incorporated. Continue to knead until dough is smooth, about 5 minutes. Transfer dough to greased large bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let rise at room temperature until doubled in size, about 1½ hours

3. Grease 12-cup muffin tin. Press down on dough to deflate and transfer to lightly floured counter (do not overflour counter). Divide dough into 2 equal balls (about 1 pound each). Roll one dough ball into 15 by 12 inch rectangle with long side parallel to counter's edge.

4. Using pizza wheel, cut dough vertically into 6 (2½ inch wide by 12 inch long) strips Brush tops of 5 strips evenly with 1 tablespoon melted butter, leaving 1 strip unbuttered. Stack strips squarely on top of each other, buttered to unbuttered side, finishing with unbuttered strip on top

5. Using sharp knife, cut stacked dough strips crosswise into 6 equal stacks. Place stacks, cut side up, in each of 6 muffin cups. Repeat with remaining dough ball and 1 tablespoon melted butter. Cover tin loosely with plastic and let dough rise at room temperature until doubled in size, 1¼ to 1½ hours. Adjust oven rack to upper middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees.

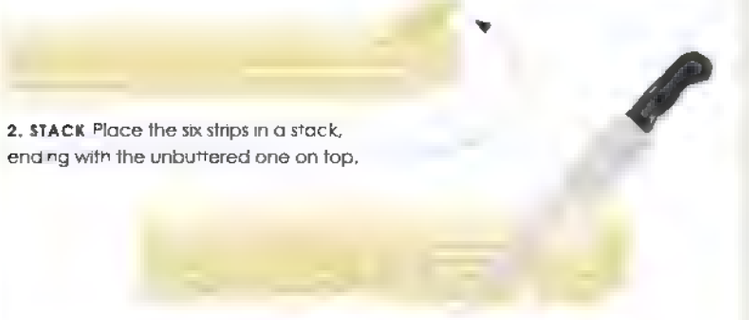
6. Bake until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes, rotating muffin tin halfway through baking. Brush rolls with remaining 2 tablespoons melted butter Let cool in muffin tin for 5 minutes. Remove rolls from muffin tin and transfer to wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE

Shaping Butter Fan Rolls

After making the dough and pressing it down, divide it into two equal balls Then follow these easy instructions

1. ROLL AND CUT Roll one of the balls into a rectangle and cut it into six strips. Brush five of the strips with melted butter



2. STACK Place the six strips in a stack, ending with the unbuttered one on top.

3. CUT Use a chef's knife to cut the stack of strips into six equal stacks.

4. PLACE IN TIN Carefully transfer each stack to a cup of a muffin tin, cut side up Repeat with remaining dough balls to fill the tin, let rise and bake

Illustration: Lauren Pettapiece

Skillet Turkey Meatballs with Lemony Rice

A smack of citrus provides a wake-up call for this easy, one-pan weeknight supper.

BY ASHLEY MOORE

Our tender turkey meatballs are flavored with scallion, parsley, and lemon.

MEATBALLS AND RICE sounds like a smart combination, until you're stuck with a pile of dirty pots and pans. I wanted tender meatballs and perfect rice, all in one skillet.

After forming the meatballs, I browned them and set them aside (they weren't done yet, but I'd begun to build flavor). I then turned to the pilaf method for the rice, toasting the grains for 2 minutes before adding liquid, a test kitchen technique that helps prevent the rice from clumping I added broth, returned the meatballs to the pan, covered it, and crossed my fingers: Twenty minutes later, the rice and meatballs were done. But something was missing: pizzazz.

Cue lemon. I added 1½ teaspoons of lemon zest to the meatballs and another 1½ teaspoons of lemon zest plus 2 tablespoons of lemon juice to the cooking liquid—just enough to add some zing

SKILLET TURKEY MEATBALLS WITH LEMONY RICE Serves 4

A 12-inch nonstick skillet with a tight-fitting lid is essential. Turn the meatballs gently in step 2 so they don't break.

- 2 slices hearty white sandwich bread, torn into 1-inch pieces
- 1¼ pounds ground turkey
- 6 scallions, white and green parts separated and sliced thin
- 1 large egg
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest plus 2 tablespoons juice, plus lemon wedges for serving
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ cups long-grain white rice
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 3¼ cups chicken broth
- 1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (½ cup)

1. Pulse bread in food processor to fine crumbs, 10 to 15 pulses; transfer to large bowl. Add turkey, 2 tablespoons scallion greens, egg, 2 tablespoons parsley, 1½ teaspoons lemon zest, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and mix with your hands until thoroughly combined. Divide mixture into 20 portions (about 1 heaping tablespoon each). Roll into meatballs, transfer to plate, and refrigerate for 15 minutes.

2. Heat oil in 12 inch nonstick skillet over medium high heat until shimmering. Cook meatballs until well browned all over, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer meatballs to paper towel–lined plate, leaving fat in skillet.

3. Return skillet to medium high heat and add rice. Cook, stirring frequently, until edges of rice begin to turn translucent, about 1 minute. Add scallion whites, garlic, and ½ teaspoon salt and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute Add broth, lemon juice, and remaining 1½ teaspoons lemon zest and bring to boil.

4. Return meatballs to skillet, cover, and reduce heat to low. Cook until rice is tender and meatballs are cooked through, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let sit, covered, for 5 minutes. Sprinkle with Parmesan, remaining scallion greens, and remaining 1 tablespoon parsley. Serve with lemon wedges.

North Carolina Lemon Pie

This light, bright lemon pie has a perfect balance of sweet, salty, and sour. Best of all? It's dead simple to make. BY BRYAN ROOF

WHEN IT ENJOYED a fleeting moment of Internet stardom recently, Atlantic Beach pie was tied to Crook's Corner restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. But while Crook's Corner does serve a deservedly popular example, versions of this pie can be found at many restaurants, mostly along the North Carolina coast, where menus often just call it "lemon pie."

In the handful of existing recipes I found in my initial research, most shared a few common elements: a crunchy, slightly salty cracker crust; a dense, opaque lemon custard, usually made with sweetened condensed milk; and a lavish pile of whipped cream on top. After a few rounds of testing, I zeroed in on the traits I loved most about this pie: the three-fer combination of salty, sour, and sweet; the intense lemon flavor; and the ease of making it.

The foundation of any great pie is its crust, and I found several variations in my research. Capt. Bill's Waterfront Restaurant in Morehead City, North Carolina, serves a lemon pie with a Ritz Cracker crust (and calls it "Down East Lemon Pie"); other pie shops and home cooks prefer a lightly salted graham cracker crust.

My tasters were happiest with a saltine crust, which is what Crook's Corner uses. But I fumbled with the construction: Mixing saltine crumbs with softened butter and a bit of sugar before pressing them into the pie plate was awkward—instead of a cohesive crust, I had a sandy mess when I sliced and served pieces of pie. By switching to melted butter to help the crumbs adhere to one another, and by adding in a bit of corn syrup to give some elasticity to the mix, I created a more pliable crust that stayed together and was much easier to press into my pie dish. After parbaking, my reworked crust set up cleanly, smoothing my way to less-sloppy slices.

Crust sorted, I turned my sights to the filling. Lemon, for all its obvious virtues, can be a tricky fruit to bake with, in a baked custard like this one, a sour, almost bitter sharpness sometimes overrides the vibrant citrus flavor you're looking for.

I set to tinkering with two specific (and, at first glance, opposing) goals: to increase the overall lemon flavor while concurrently tempering, but not losing, the sourness (and without losing the ease of this pie's dump, stir, and bake process, the last thing I wanted to do was create a stovetop custard ahead of baking).

Saltines in the crust? You bet. They add a welcome savory touch to this sweet-and-sour pie.

While most recipes use just lemon juice in the custard, I wondered if lemon zest, which test kitchen experiments have shown holds up well to baking, would be my salve. After a few rounds of trial and error, I settled on a tablespoon of fragrant lemon zest for more citrus zing. I added ¼ cup of heavy cream to soften the lemon's sharper edges without compromising the overall texture of the custard.

I finished off my pie with a generous topping of sweetened whipped cream and served it up, and though my tasters were enthusiastic, there was something lacking: salt. What sets this pie apart from other lemon pies is a slightly saline note, and despite the salt from the crackers in the crust, there was room for more here.

For my next round, I added a bit of salt to the whipped cream—a daring gamble that pleased some surprised tasters but left others less enthusiastic. So instead I closed the gap by adding salt to the other components: ⅛ teaspoon to the crust and another ⅛ teaspoon to the filling.

The pie was now in balance. One thing didn't change during my experiments with this recipe: its simplicity. This rewarding lemon pie is still as easy as . . . you know.

NORTH CAROLINA LEMON PIE

Makes one 9-inch pie

You will need about 53 saltines, roughly one-and-a-half sleeves, to equal 6 ounces.

CRUST

- **6 ounces saltines**
- **⅛ teaspoon salt**
- **10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**
- **¼ cup light corn syrup**

FILLING

- **1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk**
- **4 large egg yolks**
- **¼ cup heavy cream**
- **1 tablespoon grated lemon zest plus ½ cup juice (3 lemons)**
- **⅛ teaspoon salt**

TOPPING

- **½ cup heavy cream, chilled**
- **2 teaspoons sugar**
- **½ teaspoon vanilla extract**

1. FOR THE CRUST: Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine saltines and salt in food processor and pulse to coarse crumbs, about 15 pulses. Add melted butter and corn syrup and pulse until crumbs are broken down into oatmeal size pieces, about 15 pulses.

2. Transfer saltine mixture to greased 9-inch pie plate. Using bottom of dry measuring cup, press crumbs into even layer on bottom and sides of plate, using your hand to keep crumbs from spilling over plate edge. Place plate on baking sheet and bake until light golden brown and fragrant, 17 to 19 minutes.

3. FOR THE FILLING: Whisk condensed milk, egg yolks, cream, lemon zest, and salt in bowl until fully combined. Whisk in lemon juice until fully incorporated.

4. With pie plate still on sheet, pour filling into crust (crust needn't be cool). Bake pie until edges are beginning to set but center still jiggles when shaken, 15 to 17 minutes. Place pie on wire rack and let cool completely. Refrigerate pie until fully chilled, about 4 hours.

5. FOR THE TOPPING: Using stand mixer fitted with whisk, whip cream, sugar, and vanilla on medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Increase speed to high and whip until stiff peaks form, 1 to 3 minutes. Spread whipped cream over top of pie. Serve.

Toffee Squares

How do you replicate the buttery-sweet flavor of toffee without making it from scratch? With a few tricks and some smart shopping. BY MORGAN BOLLING

HERE'S THE THING about toffee: While its buttery flavor and crunchy texture are incredibly appealing, it can be a pain in the neck to make. Most recipes require the cook to carefully and constantly stir a bubbling hot mixture of sugar and butter while using a candy thermometer to keep tabs on its temperature. Minor issues like a 5-degree difference in temperature, insufficient stirring, or a too-humid kitchen can ruin it. So it comes as no surprise that most home recipes for toffee treats rely on the flavor of brown sugar and/or store-bought toffee bits. No shame in this game. Commercial toffee bits can be great.

I made a handful of published recipes for toffee squares that were quite varied. Some called for using crushed graham crackers in the crust, while others produced crusts closer to shortbread. The toppings ranged from a buttery sugar syrup to caramel, melted chocolate, and melted toffee bits.

My tasters and I quickly discovered that these recipes produced bars that lacked not just toffee flavor but also a solid balance of the sweet, salty, and crunchy elements that should define them. Determined to make toffee squares that would bridge these gaps, I combined our favorite elements of these recipes to put together a baseline working recipe that I could then break down into components to perfect.

I started by baking a simple brown sugar–shortbread crust (made with flour, granulated and brown sugars, salt, and butter) to provide a toffee-like base flavor. When the crust was hot out of the oven, I sprinkled it with chocolate chips, smoothed out the melting chips, and then added chopped almonds. Not bad, but it was a little tough and short on toffee. Switching the granulated sugar for confectioners' sugar (which contains a little cornstarch) was an easy fix for a more tender crust. Adding store-bought toffee bits to the crust upped the toffee flavor considerably.

Crust settled, I focused on chocolate. I did several side-by-side tests with different types of chocolate (semisweet, milk, and white) melted over the base. Tasters preferred the sweet and mild milk chocolate chips. I increased the amount to a full cup so the thicker layer of melted chocolate would better anchor the almonds to the top of the squares.

I was almost there, but my tasters wanted more crunch. For my next test, I toasted the almonds to simultaneously amplify both their flavor and crunch. And since I was already using toffee bits in the crust, I tried adding ¼ cup on top of the bars for more impact. Sweet victory: I'd achieved deep but buttery, salty, sweet toffee flavor without having to pull out a saucepan or candy thermometer.

A double dose of toffee bits transforms these easy treats.

TOFFEE SQUARES Makes 24 bars

There are two kinds of toffee bits sold at the market; be sure to buy the ones without chocolate. Note that the squares need to cool for about 3 hours in order to set the chocolate; if you're in a hurry, you can put the bars in the refrigerator for 1 hour. But don't store them in the fridge much longer than that because the crust can become too hard.

- 1½ cups (7½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- ⅓ cup packed (2⅓ ounces) dark brown sugar
- ⅓ cup (1⅓ ounces) confectioners' sugar
- ½ cup plain toffee bits
- 1 cup (6 ounces) milk chocolate chips
- ¾ cup whole almonds, toasted and chopped coarse

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Make foil sling for 13 by 9 inch baking pan by folding 2 long sheets of aluminum foil; first sheet should be 13 inches wide and second sheet should be 9 inches wide. Lay sheets of foil in pan perpendicular to each other, with extra foil hanging over edges of pan. Push foil into corners and up sides of pan, smoothing foil flush to pan. Spray lightly with vegetable oil spray.

2. Combine flour and salt in bowl. Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat butter, brown sugar, and confectioners' sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture in 3 additions, scraping down bowl as needed, until dough becomes sandy with large pea-size pieces, about 30 seconds. Add ¼ cup toffee bits and mix until combined.

3. Transfer dough to prepared pan and press into even layer using bottom of dry measuring cup. Bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking.

4. Remove crust from oven, sprinkle with chocolate chips, and let sit until softened, about 5 minutes. Spread softened chocolate into even layer over crust using small offset spatula. Sprinkle almonds and remaining ¼ cup toffee bits evenly over chocolate, then press gently to set into chocolate. Let bars sit at room temperature until chocolate is set, about 3 hours.

5. Using foil overhang, lift bars out of pan. Cut into 24 pieces and serve. (Toffee squares can be stored in airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days.)

TEST KITCHEN TECHNIQUE

Easy Chocolate Layer

We sprinkle chips onto the hot baked crust. In just 5 minutes, the chocolate is soft enough to spread.

Cooking Class Italian-Style Meat Sauce

Meat sauce is often uninspired—or worse, features rubbery meat. Here's how to make it right. BY BRYAN ROOF

ITALIAN-STYLE MEAT SAUCE

Makes about 6 cups sauce, enough for 2 pounds pasta

Except for ground round (which tasters found spongy and bland), this recipe will work with most types of ground beef, as long as it is 85 percent lean. (Eighty percent lean beef will turn the sauce greasy; 90 percent will make it fibrous.) If using dried oregano, add the entire amount with the reserved tomato juice in step 2. Leftover sauce can be refrigerated for up to three days or frozen for up to one month.

- **4 ounces white mushrooms, trimmed and broken into rough pieces**
- **1 slice hearty white sandwich bread, torn into quarters**
- **2 tablespoons whole milk**
- **Salt and pepper**
- **1 pound 85 percent lean ground beef**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 large onion, chopped fine**
- **6 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tablespoon tomato paste**
- **¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- **1 (14.5-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained with ¼ cup juice reserved**
- **1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried**
- **1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes**
- **¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese**

1. Process mushrooms in food processor until finely chopped, about 8 pulses, scraping down sides of bowl as needed; transfer to bowl. Add bread, milk, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper to now-empty processor and process until paste forms, about 8 pulses. Add beef and pulse until mixture is well combined, about 6 pulses.

2. Heat oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat until just smoking. Add onion and mushrooms and cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are browned and dark bits form on pan bottom, 6 to 12 minutes. Stir in garlic, tomato paste, and pepper flakes; cook until fragrant and tomato paste starts to brown, about 1 minute. Add reserved tomato juice and 2 teaspoons oregano (if using dried, add full amount), scraping up any browned bits. Add meat mixture and cook, breaking meat into small pieces with spoon, until beef loses its raw color, 2 to 4 minutes, making sure that meat does not brown.

3. Stir in crushed tomatoes and diced tomatoes and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to low and gently simmer until sauce has thickened and flavors have blended, about 30 minutes. Stir in Parmesan and remaining 1 teaspoon oregano; season with salt and pepper to taste.

STEP BY STEP **Ten Steps to Simple Meat Sauce**

1. PROCESS MUSHROOMS
Finely chop the mushrooms in the food processor.
WHY? The smaller mushroom pieces release more flavor and contribute to the potent fond on the bottom of the saucepan.

2. MAKE PANADE
Process the bread and milk to form a panade.
WHY? A panade helps keep the ground beef tender and moist when it is cooked to medium and beyond.

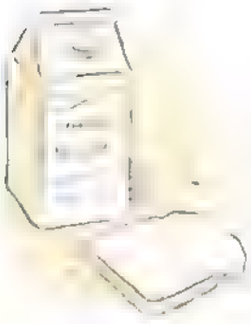
3. PROCESS BEEF
Add the beef to the panade in the food processor.
WHY? This helps quickly and thoroughly incorporate the panade into the meat.

4. BROWN VEGETABLES
Cook the mushrooms and onion until dark bits form on the saucepan bottom.
WHY? These browned bits (fond) add flavor and complexity to the sauce.

5. ADD TOMATO PASTE
Brown the tomato paste.
WHY? This drives off some of the paste's moisture and develops its flavor.

Good Ideas

TEST KITCHEN TIPS FOR ANY MEAT SAUCE



Make a Panade

A panade is a mixture of starch and liquid—most commonly white bread and whole milk. You'll often see panades in meatball and meatloaf recipes, where they help the ground meat stay moist and hold its shape. But a panade also serves a critical purpose in our Italian-Style Meat Sauce. The starch in the bread absorbs liquid from the milk, which in turn forms a coating around the protein molecules in the meat, preventing them from linking together in a tough matrix. The result? Meat that is tender, not rubbery.

Don't Brown the Beef

With larger cuts of meat, we often call for browning on the stovetop before roasting or braising to add an extra layer of flavor. But we don't recommend this step for most ground meat sauces because the extra cooking up front can toughen the small pieces of meat, leaving you with chewy little nuggets rather than soft, tender beef.

Focus on the (Vegetable) Fond

Fond is a French word that refers to the deeply flavorful browned bits that stick to the bottom of the pan when you sear meat or vegetables. Do not waste it. For many sauces or stews, you'll want the flavor locked in these bits to find its way to your fork. Here's how: After creating a fond, you deglaze the pan by pouring liquid over its hot surface and scraping up the browned bits to distribute them throughout the mixture. Because we don't recommend browning the meat for this recipe, the fond comes from the chopped onion and minced mushrooms. You'll see browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pot after you sauté the mushrooms; using the juice from the diced tomatoes to scrape up the fond ensures that none of the flavor gets lost.

Key Ingredients

The Right Ground Beef

The U.S. Department of Agriculture forbids the sale of packaged ground beef with more than 30 percent fat by weight. We call for 85 percent lean (15 percent fat) beef for this recipe. Unfortunately, most prepackaged ground beef in the meat case won't identify the cut, which means it may be any cut or combination of cuts. Your best bet? Ask the butcher to freshly grind a pound of chuck, which has the right ratio of fat to lean meat. Avoid round, which is much too lean and often gristly.

Triple Up on Tomatoes

Unlike most canned produce, good-quality canned tomatoes offer flavors that, in cooked applications, taste as good as (and sometimes better than) fresh in-season tomatoes. In a sauce like this, they're irreplaceable. We use three kinds of canned tomato products in this sauce: The browned tomato paste adds depth and body, while the crushed and diced tomatoes, which break down to different degrees during the cooking, give the sauce a range of textures. Our favorite canned tomato paste is Goya Tomato Paste. For canned diced tomatoes, we like Hunt's Diced Tomatoes. And for canned crushed tomatoes, our taste test winner was Tuttorosso Crushed Tomatoes in Thick Puree with Basil.

OUR FAVORITE PASTE

OUR FAVORITE DICED

OUR FAVORITE CRUSHED

Savory Flavor Boosters

To intensify the overall meatiness in a sauce, we often turn to ingredients high in umami (savory) flavors. For this sauce, browned minced mushrooms and Parmesan cheese both contribute umami richness. Also adding savory depth: six cloves of minced garlic, which transform from sharp to sweet during the slow simmer, and red pepper flakes for a hit of spice.

6. DEGLAZE
Add the tomato juice and scrape up the fond from the bottom of the pot.
WHY? The juice helps loosen the fond and incorporate it into the sauce.

7. GENTLY COOK BEEF
Add the meat mixture, breaking it into small pieces, and cook until it loses its raw color. Take care not to let it brown.
WHY? Browning the meat can cause it to dry out and become chalky and pebbly.

8. ADD TOMATOES
Stir in crushed and drained diced tomatoes.
WHY? Using two types of tomato adds textural variety to the sauce.

9. SIMMER
Let the sauce bubble gently over low heat.
WHY? Simmering allows the flavors to marry, and the relatively short 30-minute cooking time helps keep the meat tender.

10. FINISH
Stir in Parmesan and fresh oregano.
WHY? The Parmesan adds flavor and subtle creaminess while the oregano adds brightness.

Illustration: Ross MacDonald

Slow Cooker Chicken Stock

Nothing beats homemade chicken stock, but it requires attention. We appealed to the slow cooker for help. BY DIANE UNGER

EVERY FREEZER, IN my opinion, should be filled with homemade chicken stock, at the ready for soups, stews, pan sauces, or any recipes that need a rich, deep, meaty base of flavor that's impossible to replicate any other way

Homemade stock tastes so much better than even the best store bought broth, but while it's not complicated to make, it does require a bit of attention—monitoring the temperature, skimming the foam that rises to the surface, standing at the stove. The last time I was standing in front of a simmering pot on the stovetop, I caught sight of my trusty slow cooker on the counter and wondered whether I could use it to make even these minor inconveniences disappear. It was worth a try, but I was adamant that the slow-cooker stock had to taste as good as the stovetop version.

One great thing about chicken stock is that it can be made with ingredients that you'd otherwise throw away: in this case, chicken bones. Whether they're bones left over from chickens you've roasted or from rotisserie chickens you've purchased, there's gold in them. I stockpiled 2½ pounds of bones (about three rotisserie chickens' worth) for each batch and started testing.

The usual suspects for a basic stock (celery, carrot, and onion) joined the leftover chicken bones (broken up into smaller pieces to release more of their flavor and body giving properties) in the slow cooker. The amount of water to add took some trial and error. I had to have enough water to barely cover the bones but not so much that the stock would emerge from the slow cooker watery and pale.

I found that 3 quarts of fresh cold water did the trick, keeping the bones submerged—essential for a good stock and, as it turns out, actually easier to do in a slow cooker, where evaporation is a nonissue. (With stovetop stocks, you often have to add liquid to keep the bones submerged.)

To season the stock, I added a bay leaf, whole black peppercorns, and salt. With the basic ingredients safely nestled in the slow cookers, time was the next piece of the puzzle to solve. After testing my stock at intervals from 4 hours to 12 hours, I found that I got the best, richest, most chicken y flavor by setting my slow cooker to high and cooking for 8 to 10 hours

For good measure, I tried this stock with meat on chicken parts and chicken feet. They, too, produced a lovely stock. But the value of using bones that were destined for the garbage bin makes this a remarkably thrifty endeavor.

With no up front cooking, this is also a remarkably easy slow cooker recipe: Just pile the ingredients into the slow cooker, add water, set it to cook, and go on about your day (or night of sleep). All you have to do at the end of cooking is strain the stock and skim the fat. The easiest way to skim the fat is to let the stock cool completely, refrigerate it, and then pop the chicken fat off the top in one piece.

The slow cooker does most of the work of making this rich, savory stock.

SLOW-COOKER CHICKEN STOCK

Makes about 3 quarts

This stock is great to use in our recipe for Matzo Ball Soup (page 17) or in any of our recipes calling for chicken broth. You can freeze chicken carcasses one at a time until you have the 2½ pounds needed for this recipe; three to four rotisserie chicken carcasses or one 6-pound roaster carcass will weigh about 2½ pounds. This recipe was developed using bones from cooked chicken.

- 3 quarts water
- 2½ pounds roasted chicken bones
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 bay leaf

1. Place all ingredients in slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 8 to 10 hours

2. Let stock cool slightly, then strain through fine mesh strainer set over large bowl. Use immediately or let cool completely, then refrigerate until cold. (When cold, surface fat will solidify and can be easily removed with spoon.) Stock will keep, refrigerated, for up to 5 days, or frozen for up to 2 months

TEST KITCHEN TIP Stock Storage

Frozen homemade chicken stock lasts for up to two months. Freeze small and medium amounts in ice cube trays or muffin tins; once frozen, pop out the stock blocks and keep them in zipper-lock bags for easy access when making pan sauces or gravy. Freeze larger amounts in plastic quart containers or zipper-lock bags, which are easy to stack in crowded freezers.

Recipe Makeover Chicken and Cheese Enchiladas

Reduced-fat enchiladas sound like a bad idea, right? Wrong.

BY CRISTIN WALSH

NORMALLY, A SUPPER of enchiladas stuffed and smothered with everything good leads to a belt loosening sense of regret. The calorie construction of meat, cheese, tortillas, and sauce is enough to make a cardiologist weep (or rejoice, as she fills her appointment calendar with cholesterol screening visits). Except on rare occasions, dishes like this are off limits for health minded eaters Common wisdom says you can look, but you can't eat.

But the thing about common wisdom, I've found, is this It's almost always ripe for revision. I was determined to create a new, healthier take on this fan favorite so I could even serve it to a table of health conscious guests.

The first order of business was also the most obvious (and the most worrisome) swapping out the full fat cheese for a lower fat version. No matter how you slice it, lower-fat cheese doesn't have as rich a profile on the plate or in the mouth. It simply has less flavor. But the lower fat cheese we chose still performs a vital role: It's cheesy in the best sense, forming strings that swing from the fork as you raise each bite After experiment ing with various low fat cheeses, includ ing Monterey Jack, Colby Jack, Ameri can, and cheddar, I found that low-fat cheddar, ounce for ounce, delivered the most flavor and the best meltiness.

Next up, the chicken. While many enchilada recipes call for flavorful (and relatively fatty) chicken thighs, I went for chicken breasts, which have a much lower fat content. The dish was still meaty, but the switch, like the cheese switch, dialed down the flavor a level or two. My tasters found the chicken breast enchiladas "pleasant," but I knew that pleasant wouldn't do. I wanted my tast ers to be knocked out

When flavor goes missing, it's my mission to replace it. Knowing a return to full fat cheese or chicken thighs was a nonstarter, I doubled down on high impact, aromatic ingredients like garlic and onion and looked to the pantry for a wider range of flavors than a typical chili powder–based enchilada sauce offers.

The answer came in canned chipotles packed in adobo sauce, which offered not just peppery, spicy heat but also a subtle smokiness—chipotle's calling card. Mincing just a tablespoon of the chipotle and tossing it with the chicken, along with 1 teaspoon of its accompa nying garlicky adobo sauce, gave our enchiladas muscle and depth without setting off fire alarms. Happier but not satisfied, I went for yet another layer of complexity with 2 teaspoons of ground cumin in the sauce and, for freshness, a toss of cilantro at the end

Low fat enchiladas? Put away your sad trombone. With this recipe make-over I saved 220 calories and 20 grams of fat per serving, but because the enchi ladas had such vibrant, exciting flavors, my tasters were none the wiser.

Poaching chicken breasts in our flavor-packed sauce proves a smart route to deep flavor

The Numbers

All nutritional information is for one serving of two enchiladas.

Traditional Chicken Enchiladas
CALORIES **560**
FAT **31 g** SATURATED FAT **17 g**

Cook's Country Reduced-Fat Chicken and Cheese Enchiladas
CALORIES **340**
FAT **11 g** SATURATED FAT **4.5 g**

REDUCED-FAT CHICKEN AND CHEESE ENCHILADAS Serves 6

Microwaving the tortillas makes them more pliable for rolling Shred the chicken into small pieces so it won't tear through the tortillas Cracker Barrel makes our favorite reduced-fat cheddar Serve these enchiladas with lime wedges, low-fat sour cream, diced avocado shredded lettuce, and hot sauce

- **1 onion, chopped fine (1 cup)**
- **1 teaspoon vegetable oil**
- **Salt and pepper**
- **1 tablespoon minced canned chipotle chile in adobo sauce plus 1 teaspoon adobo sauce**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 teaspoons ground cumin**
- **2 teaspoons chili powder**
- **1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce**
- **1 cup water**
- **1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed**
- **8 ounces 50 percent light cheddar cheese, shredded (2 cups)**
- **½ cup minced fresh cilantro**
- **12 (6-inch) corn tortillas**

KEY INGREDIENT
Chipotles in Adobo
Talk about bang for buck: This little can contains smoky peppers, tangy vinegar, pungent spices, and more.

ONE INGREDIENT, MANY FLAVORS

1. Adjust oven rack to middle posi tion and heat oven to 350 degrees Combine ½ cup onion, oil, and ½ teaspoon salt in large saucepan. Cover and cook over medium low heat, stir ring often, until onions have softened, 5 to 8 minutes.

2. Stir in chipotle and adobo sauce, garlic, cumin, and chili powder and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds Stir in tomato sauce and water and bring to simmer. Add chicken and return to simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover, and cook until chicken registers 160 degrees, 10 to 15 minutes, flip ping chicken halfway through cooking

3. Off heat, transfer chicken to plate and let cool slightly. Using 2 forks, shred into small pieces. Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Combine 1 cup cheddar, cilantro, shredded chicken, ½ cup sauce, and remaining ½ cup onion in bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Spread ½ cup sauce in bottom of 13 by 9 inch baking dish. Stack tortillas on plate, cover with damp towel, and microwave until warm and pliable, about 1 minute. Spread half of warm tortillas on counter. Spread level ⅓ cup chicken mixture across center of each tortilla, roll up tortillas tightly, and arrange crosswise, seam side down, in prepared dish. Repeat with remain ing 6 tortillas and filling

5. Cover enchiladas with remain ing sauce. Sprinkle remaining 1 cup cheddar evenly over top. Cover dish with aluminum foil and bake until enchiladas are hot through out, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes Serve.

Cooking for Two Weeknight Pork Stew

Could we make a light-yet-complex spring stew with tender vegetables and savory pork—in less than an hour? BY AARON FURMANEK

A SPRING DAY is just as likely to be a lion as a lamb, and sometimes a warm stew is exactly what you need for a soothing, satisfying lunch or dinner at this time of year. But stews often require hours of sautéing and simmering, and when it's just two for dinner, the leftovers can be a little much. I wanted a stew that was both complex and light, something that featured tender vegetables and deeply flavored pork and that could be on the table in less than an hour. Was I asking too much?

Our sister magazine, *Cook's Illustrated*, published a recipe for French Style Pork Stew a couple of years ago; it's a fantastic recipe, but it takes more than 3 hours to make. I was after a similar return in much less time. Choosing the right cut of pork was my first priority. I knew that I couldn't use a traditional stew cut like pork shoulder because it takes too long to become tender. Instead, I chose two quicker cooking, lean cuts for my first tests: pork loin and tenderloin. I cut the meat into ¾ inch pieces, browned them, added chicken broth, and simmered until the meat was cooked through. Unfortunately, neither performed well with this technique—both were tough and chewy. But my tasters preferred the tenderloin, so I decided to go with that cut. I'd just need to find a more gentle cooking method.

Thinking about how a number of Asian soups are made, I wondered. Could I build the stew base first and then add the raw cubes of pork to the simmering liquid? I made a quick but flavorful broth by sautéing sliced kielbasa (which is precooked and has a ton of flavor) with onion and carrots, and then adding chicken broth, stirring in cubed potatoes, and simmering. After a few tests I found that I could add the potatoes up front with everything else to no ill effect (which saved time) and that garlic and herbes de Provence contributed fantastic supporting flavors with a minimum of fuss.

A spring stew needs something green, so I tried adding spinach (too slimy), escarole (too bitter), and kale (too strong) before landing on sliced savoy cabbage. The cabbage contributed just enough flavor and texture without taking over the stew.

The small chunks of pork tenderloin cook through off heat to ensure that they stay tender

Only now that I had a flavorful broth and tender vegetables did I add the pork tenderloin. It took me a few tests to nail down the timing: It was best to add the raw pork pieces to the pot when the vegetables had cooked to just tender, simmer everything for just 30 seconds, and then take the pot off the burner to let the pork finish cooking in the residual heat.

This stew was shaping up, but one problem remained: The broth was too loose. I found an easy fix using an item already in the pot: the potatoes. Borrowing a technique from another test kitchen recipe, I stirred the potato mixture constantly for 3 minutes as it was sautéing. This helped release starch from the potatoes; the starch, in turn, helped thicken the stew once the broth was added. For good measure, I mashed some of the potatoes right in the broth, adding even more body.

I now had succulent bits of pork and sausage, tender vegetables, and a savory broth full of bright flavors. A sprinkle of chives offered a touch of freshness, a final nod to spring.

TEST KITCHEN DISCOVERY

Shortcuts to Big Flavor

KIELBASA
Adds garlicky meatiness.

HERBES DE PROVENCE
One jar, many herbs.

PORK TENDERLOIN CHUNKS
Short cooking time.

COUNTRY-STYLE PORK STEW FOR TWO

It's important to stir the potato mixture continuously in step 1 to release the potato starch that will help give body to the stew. Green cabbage can be substituted for the savoy cabbage, but it should be added to the pot with the broth in step 2 and simmered for 15 minutes total.

- 1 (12-ounce) pork tenderloin, trimmed and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 8 ounces Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 4 ounces kielbasa sausage, halved lengthwise and sliced ½ inch thick
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ½-inch chunks
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon herbes de Provence
- 2 cups chicken broth
- ¼ head savoy cabbage, cored and cut into 1-inch pieces (1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives

1. Pat pork dry with paper towels and season with ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper; set aside. Heat oil in large saucepan over medium heat until shimmering. Add potatoes, kielbasa, carrots, and onion and cook, stirring constantly, until potato starch begins to release and coat other ingredients, about 3 minutes. Add garlic and herbes de Provence and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

2. Add broth and bring to boil. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer until vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. Add cabbage, cover, and cook for 5 minutes longer.

3. Increase heat to high and bring to boil. Stir in pork and cook until no longer pink, about 30 seconds. Remove from heat, cover, and let sit until pork is cooked through, about 7 minutes.

4. Using back of spoon, mash about one-third of potatoes against side of saucepan until stew is slightly thickened. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, sprinkled with chives.

Five Easy Recipes Tuna Salads

Right out of the can, tuna is chalky and bland—you need to fix those problems before your tuna salad can be any good. BY ASHLEY MOORE

DO YOU REALLY need a recipe for tuna salad? After all, don't you just open the can and dump the tuna into a bowl with some mayonnaise, salt and pepper, and maybe a little chopped onion or celery?

Well, yes and no: While this simple dump-and-stir method produces passable tuna salad, it tends to be bland, chalky, and, sometimes, if the tuna's not completely drained and dried, watery. And we were after something better than just passable—we wanted great.

We tasted every variety of canned tuna sold in supermarkets—packed in oil and water; salted and unsalted; solid, chunk, and flaked; white and light. The runaway winner for clean flavor was solid white tuna packed in water.

Working with three cans' worth of solid white tuna (enough for four hefty sandwiches), we found that blotting the tuna dry with paper towels—before adding anything else—ensured that the finished tuna salad was not squishy and watery. Mashing the dried tuna with a fork made for a nice, uniform consistency. Mixing onion-infused olive oil (which we quickly and easily make in the microwave) into the dried, mashed tuna not only moistened the salad but took care of the blandness. Adding lemon juice and a bit of sugar with the mayo rounded out the flavor.

With such a strong foundation, why not build up? Incorporating crunchy apple, walnuts, and tarragon brings tuna salad into Waldorf territory—a delicious revelation. A variation with cornichons and whole-grain mustard highlights the brininess of the tuna. Curry and grapes, a combination most often reserved for chicken salad, work together to bring a warm sweetness to the mix. And finally, hard-cooked eggs, radishes, and capers yield a tuna salad reminiscent of one served at my favorite deli in Brooklyn.

It may sound odd, but the key to great texture is to dry the canned tuna before dressing it.

CLASSIC TUNA SALAD

Makes 2 cups; enough for 4 sandwiches

For slightly milder salads, use an equal amount of shallot instead of onion.

- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 (5-ounce) cans solid white tuna in water
- ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 celery rib, minced
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper

1. Combine onion and oil in small bowl and microwave until onion begins to soften, about 2 minutes. Let onion mixture cool for 5 minutes. Place tuna in fine-mesh strainer and press dry with paper towels. Transfer tuna to medium bowl and mash with fork until finely flaked.

2. Stir mayonnaise, celery, lemon juice, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and onion mixture into tuna until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve. (Salad can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

TUNA SALAD WITH CURRY AND GRAPES

Add 1 teaspoon curry powder to bowl with onion and oil before microwaving. Add 1 cup green grapes, halved, to salad.

TUNA SALAD WITH HARD-COOKED EGGS, RADISHES, AND CAPERS

Substitute 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil for olive oil and 6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil for mayonnaise. Add 2 thinly sliced hard-cooked eggs; 2 trimmed, halved, and thinly sliced radishes; and ¼ cup capers, minced, to salad.

TUNA SALAD WITH APPLE, WALNUTS, AND TARRAGON

Add 1 apple, cored and cut into ½-inch pieces, ½ cup walnuts, toasted and chopped coarse; and 1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon to salad.

TUNA SALAD WITH CORNICHONS AND WHOLE-GRAIN MUSTARD

Add ¼ cup finely chopped cornichons, 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives, and 1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard to salad.

SHOPPING The Tastiest Tuna

Our favorite canned tuna is flavorful but not fishy, with no excess liquid.

TASTE TEST WINNER
Wild Planet Wild Albacore Tuna.

Taste Test Supermarket Sharp Cheddar Cheese

Does aging make for better sharp cheddar? Turns out, it's complicated.

BY LAUREN SAVOIE

YOU DON T HAVE to go to a fancy shop to find great cheddar In recent years, inexpensive supermarket cheddars—like Cracker Barrel, Cabot, and Tillamook have taken top honors in international cheese competitions, beating out much pricier artisan brands Supermarket cheddar comes in a few varieties—mild, medium, sharp, extra sharp—but we reach for sharp cheddar when we need a cheese that's complex enough for snacking but versatile enough for cooking

But what exactly is "sharp" cheddar? In general, cheese gets sharper the longer it ages, but the U S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) doesn't regulate cheddar labeling, and it's up to the manufacturer to determine what's sharp We've found that most manufacturers consider the aging time frame for sharp cheddar to be six to 12 months

We selected seven nationally available products to test: five cheeses labeled sharp cheddar and two "aged" cheddars that fall within the six to 12 month time frame. Since many brands offer both orange and white sharp cheddars (see "The Color of Cheddar"), we asked each manufacturer to identify its best-selling color and ended up with an almost equal mix of orange and white cheeses. Twenty one America's Test Kitchen staffers tasted the cheeses plain and in grilled cheese sandwiches.

Texture was a nonissue: Most products were "creamy" and slightly "crumbly," just how we like sharp cheddar; in grilled cheese they were pleasantly "melty" and "gooey." Flavor differences were more apparent when we tasted the cheeses plain. While we liked most of the cheddars, a few fell to the bottom of the pack for "funky," "sweet" flavors that, while not necessarily unpleasant, were unexpected. We preferred products with the familiar "bright" and "buttery" flavor of "classic" cheddar

Tasters preferred sharper cheeses. But when we contacted manufacturers to find out how long each product is aged, we learned that our top-ranked cheeses actually age three months less than lower-ranked products, for nine versus 12 months While time is one factor in flavor, how well a cheese ages also depends on how it was made and stored. Most cheesemakers weren't willing to share those secrets, so we sent the cheeses to an independent lab to learn why some younger cheeses tasted sharper and more complex.

Here, things started to line up: The longer-aged cheddars at the bottom of our rankings had higher pH values (meaning they were less acidic) than top-ranked cheddars. According to Dean Sommer, cheese and food technologist at the University of Wisconsin Madison, a high pH is a good indication that the product didn't age well. Many factors during production can influence the pH of a cheddar—what the cows were fed, the type of bacteria used to culture the cheese, how long the milk was heated and to what temperature Whatever the cause, Sommer said cheddar that begins life at a high pH will typically end up overfermented, off flavored, and sweet by the time it's ready for sale.

When the cheeses were melted into grilled cheese, however, the funky flavors mellowed. In fact, tasters thought that the "fruity" and "grassy" flavors of lower-ranked cheeses added a nuanced complexity to an otherwise mild sandwich. Only one product, Boar's Head Sharp Wisconsin Cheddar, which tasters found mild when tasted plain, mellowed even more when melted, becoming "boring" and "bland." Here, moisture was the problem. According to our lab tests, it contained the highest percentage of moisture in the group—roughly 37 percent moisture compared with 34 percent to 36 percent moisture in winning products. High moisture content, like high pH, can prevent the development of flavor and cause the cheese to age poorly. With the exception of this one product, most cheeses made grilled cheese that was "nutty," "buttery," and "rich" enough for our tasters.

Ultimately, we ended up recommending six of the seven cheddars we tried. Our former winner, Cabot Vermont Sharp Cheddar ($3.78 for 8 ounces), once again took top honors for its complex nutty flavor and balanced sharpness.

RECOMMENDED	TASTERS' NOTES
CABOT Vermont Sharp Cheddar **Price:** $3.78 for 8 oz ($0.47 per oz) **Color:** White **pH:** 5.4 **Moisture:** 35.8% **Aged for:** 9 months	This white cheddar took top honors for its "nutty," "almost smoky" "caramel" notes and "complex" sharpness. Tasters loved its "buttery," "creamy" texture that "completely satisfied comfort food cravings" when it was melted for grilled cheese
TILLAMOOK Sharp Cheddar Cheese **Price:** $5.48 for 8 oz ($0.69 per oz) **Color:** Orange **pH:** 5.2 **Moisture:** 34.6% **Aged for:** 9 months	This faintly orange cheddar was deemed "bright" and "almost citrusy" for its "zesty" tang and "bold" sharpness. When melted, its "gooey," "buttery" texture earned this cheddar recognition as "a perfect cheese for grilled cheese"
CRACKER BARREL Sharp Cheddar Cheese **Price:** $3.89 for 8 oz ($0.49 per oz) **Color:** Orange **pH:** 5.2 **Moisture:** 35.2% **Aged for:** Proprietary	This popular block cheese was "salty," "acidic," "balanced," and "punchy," with a "quintessential sharp cheddar" flavor that made it "great for snacking." In grilled cheese, tasters found this cheddar "friendly" and "tame"
KRAFT Natural Sharp Cheddar Cheese **Price:** $4.79 for 8 oz ($0.60 per oz) **Color:** Orange **pH:** 5.2 **Moisture:** 35.2% **Aged for:** Proprietary	"Mild," "bright," and "waxy," this orange cheddar had a "rich," "elegant sharpness" and "smooth" texture that made for "gooey," "melty" grilled cheese "Tastes like childhood," said one taster, who thought this product's "classic" flavor would be popular with kids.
KERRYGOLD Aged Cheddar **Price:** $5 for 7 oz ($0.71 per oz) **Color:** White **pH:** 5.6 **Moisture:** 36.6% **Aged for:** 12 months	With a "mild" sharpness, this Irish import earned comparisons with Swiss cheese for its "slightly funky," "tangy" flavor its subtle "grassy," "onion" notes added "complexity" to grilled cheese, though a few tasters felt that it had "too many unexpected flavors" for cheddar
SARGENTO Tastings Aged Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese **Price:** $2.79 for 3.95 oz ($0.71 per oz) **Color:** Orange **pH:** 5.7 **Moisture:** 35.3% **Aged for:** 12 months	This petite orange wedge was "thick" and "chewy," with "toasty" "butterscotch" notes that became "sweet" and "slightly nutty" when the cheese was melted. A few tasters thought that this cheddar had an unusual "tannic," "tart flavor," "like port wine cheese."
RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS	
BOAR'S HEAD Sharp Wisconsin Cheddar Cheese **Price:** $4.50 for 10 oz ($0.45 per oz) **Color:** White **pH:** 5.2 **Moisture:** 37.1% **Aged for:** 9 months	Tasters enjoyed this product's "mild," "creamy" flavor and "smooth" texture for snacking, but a higher moisture content caused this white cheddar to become "bland" and "boring" when melted into grilled cheese. Summarized one taster "more reminiscent of Monterey Jack than cheddar"

The Color of Cheddar

Cheddar is naturally white or pale yellow, depending on what the cows eat; orange cheddar has annatto extract, a flavorless plant colorant, added White cheddar is more popular in the eastern United States, while the rest of the country favors orange. But is there any difference aside from color?

To find out, we pitted one brand's white and orange sharp cheddars against each other in a blindfolded tasting. Surprisingly, all tasters were able to identify the color of the cheese via taste alone. The white cheddar was more acidic and sharper, while the orange cheese had a softer texture and milder flavor Why? We learned that some manufacturers actually make their orange and white cheddars differently, altering moisture, fat, and aging to reflect regional preferences

A true blind tasting of sharp cheddar

Equipment Review Can Openers

One smart new opener kicked the rest to the curb.

BY HANNAH CROWLEY

KEY **Good** ★★★ **Fair** ★★ **Poor** ★

EZRA J. WARNER patented the first U.S. can opener in Connecticut in 1858, made from a bayonet and a sickle lashed together. At the time, most cans were about 3/16 inch thick and were typically opened with a hammer and chisel. Luckily for our equipment testers, technology has improved.

Our past winners have been discontinued or redesigned, so we took a fresh look. In our last testing, we looked at safety openers and traditional models. The former cuts into the side of the can, leaving dull "safe" edges; the latter cuts into the top of the can, leaving jagged edges. We didn't prefer one style to the other, so we again included both in our lineup of seven openers, priced from roughly $15 to $30. Our goal: to find one that attached and detached easily, was comfortable to operate, and dealt safely and easily with the severed lid.

We enlisted testers—large and small, lefty and righty—to open hundreds of cans: squat cans of tuna fish, small cans of tomato paste, medium cans of chick peas, and large cans of whole tomatoes. We evaluated each model during every step. First, attaching: All the traditional openers attached the same way—their two straight arms opened and clamped the gears onto the can. Having grown up with this style, our testers found these openers intuitive.

As for the safety openers, there were two different designs. The first housed the circular blades that clamp onto the can underneath the head, the second housed them on the side. The openers with blades underneath were harder to attach because the blades are hidden, so it often took multiple attempts to correctly align the openers. The side-style openers solved this problem—the blades were visible for easy alignment, and a thin metal railing propped the opener at the correct height.

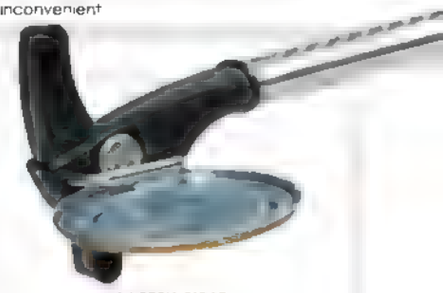
Next, smoothness and ease of operation, or how easy it was to drive the openers around the cans. If the handles were too thin or round, they cramped our hands. We preferred straight, oval handles. We also liked textured handles or those coated in a tacky rubber for traction; one opener made of slick plastic felt like a slippery fish.

The rotating handle that you turn to move the opener around the can is called the driving handle. The best were longer for better leverage and easier turning, with ergonomic grooves that securely braced our thumbs.

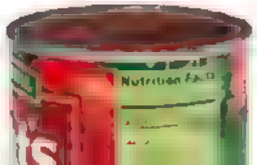
Finally, we evaluated detaching, safety, and lid disposal. We docked safety points from the one traditional opener that didn't have a lid disposal device. The others all did: Two had small pincers, two had magnets, and two used their blades to pull off the lid. The pincers were finicky. The magnets were inconsistent, one was too weak and the second too strong. Testers preferred the two whose blades and gears automatically clamped onto the lid and removed it when it was completely severed: safe, clean, and simple.

We asked a lot of our lineup, and almost all the contenders failed. But one tester summed up our thoughts on the sole successful model, asking: "Can you be in love with a can opener?" We think so. The Fissler Magic Smooth-Edge Can Opener ($29) is a safety-style opener. It was easy to attach and operate, tidily and safely disposed of lids, and is dishwasher-safe. Compared with a sickle and bayonet, this opener practically *is* magic.

	CRITERIA		TESTERS' NOTES
HIGHLY RECOMMENDED			
FISSLER Magic Smooth-Edge Can Opener **Model:** FIS7570 **Price:** $29 **Style:** Safety **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes **Lid Disposal:** Automatic	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★★★ ★★★ ★★★	Sleek, smart, and comfortable, this opener's visible gears were easy to attach. The straight, textured handle fit comfortably and securely in hand, and the ergonomic driving handle was longer for better leverage and easier turning. It pulled off the lid when it was finished for safe and easy disposal.
RECOMMENDED WITH RESERVATIONS			
ZYLISS Lock 'N Lift Can Opener **Model:** 20362 **Price:** $15.99 **Style:** Traditional **Dishwasher-Safe:** No **Lid Disposal:** Magnet	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★★★ ★★★ ★	This opener attached readily with an obvious click and turned easily, with grippy plastic handles. While it did have a lid-lifting magnet, it was often too strong to readily release the lid; also, it was located on the front, so testers had to dip the head of the opener into the can's contents to retrieve the lid.
J.A. HENCKELS Twin Pure Can Opener **Model:** 12914-000 **Price:** $19.99 **Style:** Safety **Dishwasher-Safe:** Yes **Lid Disposal:** Automatic	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★★★ ★ ★★★	This opener had an intuitive and visible attaching mechanism and seamless lid disposal, just like our winner. But it was heavier, with uncomfortable handles that were round, short, and without any ergonomic grooves, which made it physically much harder to turn.
NOT RECOMMENDED			
KUHN RIKON Auto Safety Master Opener **Model:** 2266 (black) **Price:** $18 **Style:** Safety **Dishwasher-Safe:** No **Lid Disposal:** Pincers	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★★ ★★ ★	This opener was hard to attach because its head blocked its gears. It had pincers for lid disposal, but they were finicky. Designed to be a five-purpose opener—cans, jars, tabs, and two kinds of bottle caps—its other uses hindered basic can opening—namely the large spike at the end of the handle for opening tabs that poked testers in the belly with each rotation.
SAVORA Can Opener **Model:** 5099588 (crimson) **Price:** $19.03 **Style:** Traditional **Dishwasher-Safe:** No **Lid Disposal:** None	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★ ★★★ ★	This opener was easy to turn, but its smooth, hard, plastic handles were slippery to use with damp hands. Thanks to a stiff latch, it was also hard to clip on and off. It doesn't have a lid disposal device, and while the company said that it was dishwasher safe, ours rusted in the machine overnight.
OXO Smooth Edge Can Opener **Model:** 1049953V1 **Price:** $21.99 **Style:** Safety **Dishwasher-Safe:** No **Lid Disposal:** Pincers	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★ ★★ ★	This opener had grippy handles but also a bulky head that blocked our view and made it hard to latch onto the can. It was difficult to tell when the lid was severed, and you have to use the pincers on the side of the opener to pry off the lid, an annoying additional step worsened by the bulky head's blocking our view of the tiny pincers.
CHEF'N EZ Squeeze Can Opener **Model:** 102-150-001 **Price:** $15.88 **Style:** Traditional **Dishwasher-Safe:** No **Lid Disposal:** Magnet	**Attaching** **Ease of Operation** **Lid Disposal**	★ ★ ★	There was nothing "EZ" about this can opener. Intended to be operated using just one hand, it was hard even using two. Its lid-lifting magnet was weak and only worked half the time, and you had to dip the whole front of the opener into the can to retrieve the top—messy and inconvenient.



SAFETY FIRST
By reorienting the cutting blade, our winner removes tops leaving no sharp edges.



Heirloom Recipe

We're looking for recipes that you treasure, that have earned a place at your table and in your heart, through many years of meals. Send us the recipes that spell home to you. Visit **CooksCountry.com/magazines/home** (or write to Heirloom Recipes, *Cook's Country*, P.O. Box 470739, Brookline, MA 02447); click on Heirloom Recipes and tell us a little about the recipe. Include your name and mailing address. **If we print your recipe, you'll receive a free one-year subscription to *Cook's Country*.**

PICKLED SHRIMP Serves 6 to 8

Sheila Williams from Escondido, Calif., writes: "Growing up in Atlanta, my mother never threw a party without serving these mild pickled shrimp as a passed hors d'oeuvre, leaving the tails on to make them easy to eat with fingers. Today, make them myself for a light lunch or first course served on Boston lettuce leaves."

The shrimp need to be refrigerated for at least 3 hours before serving.

- **2 pounds extra-large shrimp (21 to 25 per pound), peeled and deveined**
- **Salt**
- **8 cups ice**
- **1 cup cider vinegar**
- **¼ cup sugar**
- **2 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled**
- **3 bay leaves**
- **1 teaspoon allspice berries**
- **1 teaspoon coriander seeds**
- **½ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- **1 cup extra-virgin olive oil**
- **¼ cup capers, minced**
- **2 tablespoons Dijon mustard**
- **2 tablespoons minced fresh dill**
- **1 tablespoon hot sauce**
- **1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- **1 cup thinly sliced red onion**
- **1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges**

1. Combine 4 cups cold water, shrimp, and 2 teaspoons salt in Dutch oven. Set pot over medium high heat and cook, stirring occasionally, until water registers 170 degrees and shrimp are just beginning to turn pink, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove from heat, cover, and let sit until shrimp are completely pink and firm, 5 to 7 minutes.

Stir ice into pot and let shrimp cool completely, about 5 minutes. Drain shrimp in colander. Transfer shrimp to paper towel–lined baking sheet and pat dry.

2. Combine vinegar, sugar, garlic, bay leaves, allspice, coriander seeds, and pepper flakes in large bowl and microwave until hot, about 2 minutes. Stir to dissolve sugar. Let cool completely. Whisk in oil, capers, mustard, dill, hot sauce, Worcestershire, and 1 teaspoon salt until combined.

3. Stir onion, lemon wedges, and shrimp into vinegar mixture until thoroughly combined. Push to submerge shrimp in marinade, then place small plate on top to keep submerged. Cover and refrigerate, stirring occasionally, for at least 3 hours or up to 48 hours. To serve, remove shrimp from marinade using slotted spoon.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

Our June/July issue features grill-ready **Smoked Beef Tenderloin** and **BBQ Chicken Thighs**. We'll hit the beach with **Hawaiian Dinner Rolls**, take a road trip to Rhode Island for **Dynamite Sandwiches**, swing by South Carolina for **Shrimp and Grits**, and visit Tennessee for **Pulled Pork Shoulder**. Still hungry? Have a slice of **French Coconut Pie**.

RECIPE INDEX

Main courses

Beef on Weck Sandwiches 7
Bierock Casserole 10
Breakfast Pizza 19
- **Chorizo and Manchego** 19
- **Sausage and Red Bell Pepper** 19

Chicken-Avocado Salad Sandwiches RC
Chicken California 13
Chicken Tostadas with Spicy Mashed Black Beans RC
Country-Style Pork Stew for Two 28
Cracker-Crusted Fried Chicken 9
Crisp Parmesan Pork Cutlets with Tomato Sauce RC
Herb-Stuffed Pork Loin 5
Italian-Style Meat Sauce 24
Jerk Pork Tenderloin with Arugula and Pineapple Salad RC
Matzo Ball Soup 17
One-Pan Pork Chops and Roasted Vegetables 14
Orecchiette with Peas, Pine Nuts, and Ricotta RC
Pasta with Roasted Cherry Tomatoes 15
Reduced-Fat Chicken and Cheese Enchiladas 27
Seafood and Chorizo Stew RC
Sesame-Hoisin-Glazed Flank Steak RC
Skillet Turkey Meatballs with Lemony Rice 21
Strip Steaks with Sautéed Onion and Mushrooms RC
Tuna Salads 29
- **Classic**
- **with Apple, Walnuts, and Tarragon**
- **with Cornichons and Whole-Grain Mustard**
- **with Curry and Grapes**
- **with Hard-Cooked Eggs, Radishes, and Capers**

Starters, sides, and stock

Apples Fried with Bacon 5
Braised Spring Vegetables 13
Butter Fan Rolls 21
Health Salad 11
Lemon and Herb Red Potato Salad 9
Pickled Shrimp 32
Slow-Cooker Chicken Stock 26

Desserts

Lemon Meringue Cake Inside Back Cover
North Carolina Lemon Pie 22
Toffee Squares 23

RC = Recipe Card

FIND THE ROOSTER!

A tiny version of this rooster has been hidden in the pages of this issue. Write to us with its location and we'll enter you in a random drawing. The first correct entry drawn will win our top-rated can opener, and each of the next five will receive a free one-year subscription to *Cook's Country*. To enter visit **CooksCountry.com/rooster** by May 31, 2015 or write to Rooster AM15 *Cook's Country*, P.O. Box 470739, Brookline, MA 02447. Include your name and address. Lisa Samec of Forest Lake, Minnesota, found the rooster in the December/January 2015 issue on page 4 and won our winning handheld mixer.

WEB EXTRAS

Free for 4 months online at **CooksCountry.com**

- **Boneless Buffalo Chicken**
- **Classic Pound Cake**
- **Cranberry-Apple-Orange Relish**
- **Easy Fresh Fruit Tart**
- **Five easy fruit chutneys**
- **Homemade Apple Butter**
- **Homemade Peach Mostarda**
- **Homemade Seville Orange Marmalade**
- **Muffin Tin Testing**
- **Peanut Butter and Jam Cake**
- **Pizza Cutter Testing**

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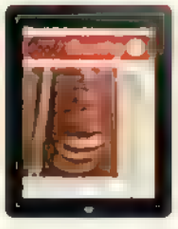

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30 MINUTE SUPPER

ORECCHIETTE WITH PEAS, PINE NUTS, AND RICOTTA

30 MINUTE SUPPER

CHICKEN-AVOCADO SALAD SANDWICHES

30 MINUTE SUPPER

STRIP STEAKS WITH SAUTÉED ONION AND MUSHROOMS

30 MINUTE SUPPER

CRISP PARMESAN PORK CUTLETS WITH TOMATO SAUCE

CHICKEN-AVOCADO SALAD SANDWICHES

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: For a twist on chicken salad, we combine tangy buttermilk, mashed avocado, and a lime vinaigrette to act as the "mayonnaise."

- ¼ cup buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper
- 1 ripe avocado, halved, pitted, and chopped coarse
- 1 (2½-pound) rotisserie chicken, skin and bones discarded, meat shredded into bite-size pieces (3 cups)
- 8 slices hearty wheat sandwich bread, toasted
- 1 head Bibb lettuce (8 ounces), leaves separated
- 2 tomatoes, cored and sliced thin

1. Combine buttermilk, lime juice, oil, sugar, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in medium bowl. Add avocado and mash into dressing with fork. Stir in chicken until fully combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste

2. Place heaping ½ cup chicken salad on each of 4 bread slices Divide and arrange lettuce and tomatoes over chicken salad, then top with remaining bread slices. Serve

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: For best results, be sure to use a very ripe avocado

ORECCHIETTE WITH PEAS, PINE NUTS, AND RICOTTA

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: To maximize flavor, we season the ricotta with mint, fresh lemon zest and juice, and spices.

- 4 ounces (½ cup) part-skim ricotta cheese
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh mint
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus 1 tablespoon juice
- Salt and pepper
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 3 shallots, sliced thin
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 pound orecchiette
- ¼ cup pine nuts, toasted

1. Combine ricotta, 2 tablespoons mint, lemon zest and juice, ½ teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, and pepper flakes in bowl; set aside Heat oil in 10 inch skillet over medium high heat until shimmering. Add shallots, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook until lightly browned, 3 to 5 minutes. Off heat, stir in peas and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, bring 4 quarts water to boil in large pot. Add pasta and 1 tablespoon salt and cook, stirring often, until al dente. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain pasta and return it to pot

3. Stir shallot mixture and reserved cooking water into pasta. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to serving platter and dollop with ricotta mixture. Sprinkle with pine nuts and remaining 1 tablespoon mint. Drizzle with extra oil. Serve

TEST KITCHEN NOTE. Our favorite ricotta cheese is Calabro Part Skim Ricotta Cheese.

CRISP PARMESAN PORK CUTLETS WITH TOMATO SAUCE

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: We add an extra flour dip to the classic three-step breading method here to ensure that the coating sticks and cooks up crisp

- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs
- 4 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (2 cups), plus extra for serving
- Salt and pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- 8 (3-ounce) boneless pork cutlets, ½ inch thick, trimmed
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- 1 cup jarred marinara sauce, warmed
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

1. Place 1 cup flour in shallow dish. Beat eggs in second shallow dish. Combine Parmesan, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, oregano, and remaining 2 tablespoons flour in third shallow dish. Pat cutlets dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. One at a time, coat cutlets lightly with flour, dip in egg mixture, dredge in Parmesan mixture, and return to flour, pressing to adhere

2. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in 12 inch nonstick skillet over medium heat until just smoking. Cook 4 cutlets until golden brown and cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer to paper towel lined plate. Wipe out skillet and repeat with remaining 2 tablespoons oil and remaining 4 cutlets. Arrange cutlets on serving platter and top with marinara sauce. Sprinkle with basil and extra Parmesan. Serve

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Serve with pasta or over polenta

STRIP STEAKS WITH SAUTÉED ONION AND MUSHROOMS

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Searing the steaks in a traditional skillet allows for the buildup of fond, the flavorful browned bits in the bottom of the skillet. Cooking the mushrooms and onion in the same skillet with a splash of balsamic vinegar makes for a complex accompaniment

- 2 (1-pound) boneless strip or rib-eye steaks, 1 to 1½ inches thick
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 8 ounces cremini mushrooms, trimmed and sliced thin
- 1 onion, halved and sliced thin
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

1. Pat steaks dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12 inch skillet over medium high heat until just smoking. Cook steaks until well browned and meat registers 125 degrees (for medium rare), about 5 minutes per side. Transfer to carving board, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes

2. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in now empty skillet over medium high heat until just smoking Add mushrooms, onion, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and cook until vegetables are well browned, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds

3. Stir vinegar and any accumulated beef juices into skillet and simmer, scraping up any browned bits, until sauce has thickened, about 1 minute. Off heat, stir in 2 tablespoons chives and butter. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Slice steaks and transfer to platter Top with sauce and sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon chives. Serve.

30-MINUTE SUPPER

JERK PORK TENDERLOIN
WITH ARUGULA AND PINEAPPLE SALAD

30-MINUTE SUPPER

SEAFOOD AND CHORIZO STEW

30-MINUTE SUPPER

CHICKEN TOSTADAS
WITH SPICY MASHED BLACK BEANS

30-MINUTE SUPPER

SESAME-HOISIN-GLAZED FLANK STEAK

SEAFOOD AND CHORIZO STEW

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: We start by cooking the chorizo and onion together to infuse this bold flavor combination into the base of the stew.

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 6 ounces chorizo sausage, quartered lengthwise and sliced ½ inch thick
- 1 onion, chopped fine
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 (8-ounce) bottle clam juice
- 1 pound extra-large shrimp (21 to 25 per pound), peeled, deveined, and tails removed
- 2 (6-ounce) skinless cod fillets, 1 to 1½ inches thick, cut into 1-inch chunks
- Salt and pepper

1. Heat oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add chorizo and onion and cook until both are lightly browned, 7 to 9 minutes. Stir in garlic and 1 teaspoon oregano and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and their juice and clam juice, scraping up any browned bits, and bring to simmer. Cook until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes.

2. Pat shrimp and cod dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Gently stir seafood into stew and cook until opaque and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 2 teaspoons oregano and season with salt and pepper to taste. Portion stew into individual bowls and drizzle with extra oil. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Our favorite clam juice is Bar Harbor Clam Juice.

JERK PORK TENDERLOIN WITH ARUGULA AND PINEAPPLE SALAD

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: To build layers of flavor, we make the warm pineapple salad in the skillet after cooking the tenderloins.

- 2 (12-ounce) pork tenderloins, trimmed
- 3 tablespoons jerk seasoning
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups ½-inch pineapple pieces
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup orange juice
- Pinch cayenne pepper
- 2 ounces (2 cups) baby arugula
- Salt and pepper

1. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 degrees. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Pat pork dry with paper towels and season with 2 tablespoons jerk seasoning. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Cook pork until browned on all sides, 5 to 7 minutes; transfer pork to prepared wire rack. Roast until meat registers 140 degrees, about 15 minutes. Transfer to carving board, tent with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes.

2. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil in now-empty skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add pineapple, onion, orange juice, cayenne, and remaining 1 tablespoon jerk seasoning and cook, scraping up any browned bits, until onion is just softened, about 3 minutes. Off heat, stir in arugula. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Slice pork, transfer to platter, and top with pineapple mixture.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Buy tenderloins that are of equal size and weight so that they cook at the same rate; make sure that they are no larger than 12 ounces, as bigger tenderloins won't fit in the skillet together.

SESAME-HOISIN-GLAZED FLANK STEAK

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: The complex flavors of hoisin sauce, rice vinegar, toasted sesame oil, and Sriracha give the sauce a kick, while a little cornstarch produces a velvety texture.

- ¼ cup hoisin sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons Sriracha sauce
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 1 (1½-pound) flank steak, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds

1. Whisk hoisin, vinegar, sesame oil, Sriracha, and cornstarch together in bowl. Pat steak dry with paper towels. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Cook steak until well browned and meat registers 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 5 to 7 minutes per side. Transfer to carving board, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes.

2. Stir hoisin mixture into now-empty skillet and cook over medium-high heat, scraping up any browned bits, until sauce has thickened, about 2 minutes. Slice steak thin on bias against grain and transfer to platter. Stir any accumulated meat juices into sauce and spoon over meat. Sprinkle with cilantro and sesame seeds. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Serve with rice.

CHICKEN TOSTADAS WITH SPICY MASHED BLACK BEANS

Serves 4

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: We add Ro-tel Diced Tomatoes & Green Chilies and fresh cilantro to the mashed black beans to contribute both texture and flavor.

- 2 (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise ½ inch thick
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- Salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, rinsed
- 1 (10-ounce) can Ro-tel Diced Tomatoes & Green Chilies
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro
- 8 (5-inch) corn tostadas, warmed
- 2 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (½ cup)
- 2 radishes, trimmed, halved, and sliced thin

1. Pat chicken dry with paper towels and toss with cumin, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Heat oil in 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking. Cook chicken until browned and cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to plate and tent loosely with foil.

2. Return now-empty skillet to medium-high heat and add beans, tomatoes, and 2 tablespoons cilantro. Cook, mashing beans with potato masher, until mixture is thickened and liquid has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

3. Arrange tostadas on serving platter. Spoon ½ cup bean mixture onto each tostada. Evenly distribute chicken, feta, radishes, and remaining 2 tablespoons cilantro over bean mixture. Serve.

TEST KITCHEN NOTE: Serve with sour cream and lime wedges.

Lemon Meringue Cake

What's better than lemon meringue pie? Cake, of course. Buttery pound cake, tangy lemon curd, and swaths of fluffy, burnished meringue make this a winner.

- 3 tablespoons plus ½ cup lemon juice (4 lemons)
- ½ teaspoon unflavored gelatin
- 4 large eggs (2 whole, 2 separated)
- 1½ cups (10½ ounces) sugar
- Salt
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces and chilled
- 1 recipe Classic Pound Cake* (or 1 store-bought pound cake)
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

FOR THE LEMON CURD: Place 1 tablespoon lemon juice in small bowl; sprinkle gelatin over top. Heat ½ cup lemon juice in small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Whisk 2 whole eggs and 2 yolks together in medium bowl; whisk in ¾ cup sugar and pinch salt. Whisking constantly, slowly pour hot lemon juice into egg mixture. Return lemon-egg mixture to saucepan and cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with wooden spoon, until mixture registers 170 degrees and is thick enough to coat spoon, about 3 minutes. Immediately remove pan from heat and stir in butter and gelatin mixture until dissolved. Strain through fine-mesh strainer set over medium bowl; set aside.

FOR THE CAKE: Using serrated knife, split cake horizontally about 2 inches from bottom. Using paring knife or fork, remove inside of cake bottom, leaving ¾-inch border along sides and bottom. Pour lemon curd into cake cavity, replace top, and wrap tightly with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 6 hours or up to 24 hours.

FOR THE MERINGUE: In bowl of stand mixer, combine corn syrup, remaining ¾ cup sugar, remaining 2 egg whites, remaining 2 tablespoons lemon juice, and pinch salt. Place over medium saucepan filled with 1 inch barely simmering water, making sure that water does not touch bottom of bowl. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture registers 160 degrees, 5 to 10 minutes. Attach bowl to mixer fitted with whisk and add vanilla. Whip on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, 5 to 10 minutes.

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Unwrap cake and place on wire rack set in rimmed baking sheet. Using spatula, spread meringue on cake. Bake until tips of meringue are light golden brown, about 5 minutes. Transfer to cake platter. Serve.

*Go to **CooksCountry.com/classicpoundcake** for our Classic Pound Cake recipe.

Inside This Issue

Bierock Casserole 10

One-Pan Pork Chop Dinner 14

Breakfast Pizza 19

Seafood and Chorizo Stew RC

Slow-Cooker Chicken Stock 26

Braised Spring Vegetables 13

Chicken California 13

North Carolina Lemon Pie 22

Pasta with Roasted Tomatoes 15

Strip Steaks with Mushrooms RC

Simple Italian Meat Sauce 24

French Pork Stew for Two 28

Chicken-Avocado Sandwiches RC

Garden State Health Salad 11

Apples Fried with Bacon 5

Cracker-Crusted Fried Chicken 9

Orecchiette with Peas RC

Pickled Shrimp 32

Beef on Weck Sandwiches 7

Five Easy Tuna Salads 29

Jerk Pork Tenderloin RC

Toffee Squares 23

Lemon and Herb Potato Salad 9

Lighter Chicken Enchiladas 27

Herb-Stuffed Roast Pork 5